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CAN WE DISPENSE WITH CHRISTIANITY?

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THE QUESTION: ITS CRUX AND IMPLICATIONS *for the* MODERN MIND

BY

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CAN WE DISPENSE WITH CHRISTIANITY

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PREFACE

I HAVE sought to state, briefly but with a proper placing of emphasis and with a just sense of the values and interests involved, the bearings of the much debated question which forms the title of this book. There is, I am confident, a crux to this question and something in the light of which that crux may be both stated and solved.

Dr. Bernard Bosanquet strongly and most rightly insists that genuine thought is not "a reproduction of reality with omissions." I have been anxious not to come short of a true explanation by an undue simplification. If I am right in my sense of what is of importance in the question my effort will not have proved vain. The question in its contemporary form and with its present insistence reaches down to a real and important base in the central problems of the life of the spirit. In the light of those problems it seeks, and, I believe, will find its answer.

I am, of course, very conscious of the brevity of this book since I am also confident that what I have sought to explain is at the root of all discussions in the philosophy of religion and regarding the value of Christianity for life and thought. Critics and

readers have been so kind as to give a good reception to my earlier books, and I hope this one may not be without use. There are many who are rather shy of a large volume, and that consideration gives me encouragement. A map on a small scale may be as accurate as, and even more useful than, a great and detailed chart. So I hope it may be with this book, though there is always the difference between ideal and attainment.

My indebtedness to the current literature on this and related topics is very great, and my sense of obligation is not limited to those books with which I am, more or less, in agreement. The standpoint adopted throughout is my own, and mine is the sole responsibility for the views and opinions advanced.

I have sought to commend my argument to those who ask, "Are these things so?" To such, possessing the honest and sound mind, and, therefore, "the scientific habit of thought," this little effort makes its appeal and cares about their verdict.

The candid, and also some of the self-confident, who are ever with us, may be inclined, as Browning noticed, "of late to opine that 'the Christian faith proves false.'" The great poet affirmed one quite unexpected reason among "reasons on reasons" why he still believed it "to be true." There is always something unexpected about the real arguments in favour of a religion which has the courage and power to say, "Your time is always ready, but

my time is not yet fully come." I hasten to add, however, that I have been very anxious not to sacrifice truth on the altar of "originality."

It will be noticed that I have often given quotations in illustration or in support of the opinions which I have expressed. I do not myself feel any obligation to apologise for this occasional preference of the words of some of our contemporary thinkers above any that I might myself have used. Quite often it simply arises out of a reasonable humility when I compare my own phraseology with that of the extracts which I have used. The sources of such quotations I have—almost without exception, I think—acknowledged at the foot of the pages. I am grateful not only to those to whom these acknowledgments are made, but also to many whose writings I may not have called to mind and whose very words I may have forgotten, but who, none the less, have afforded inspiration or provoked enquiry.

My warmest thanks are due to my wife for encouragement and help in preparation of this volume for the press, and also to the Rev. Hugh Martin and the Rev. F. A. Cockin for their kindness in reading the proofs and for most helpful suggestions.

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A purified and enlarged Christianity is destined to be the religion of humanity.—ANON.

So far from being effete, Christianity is only beginning to be developed.—A. P. STANLEY.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God.

CAN WE DISPENSE WITH CHRISTIANITY?

I.—THE QUESTION: ITS CONTEMPORARY FORM AND COMPLICATIONS

The contemporary form of the question—Its complications—The crux of the question as raised by current investigation and in view of Christianity's claim to possess absolute worth and of its refusal to be absorbed in a synthesis of beliefs.

THE question which forms our title is no new question, though it presents novel features for the life and thought of the present day. In recent years both the traditional positions of Christianity and the accepted estimate of its value have been widely and seriously challenged. These attacks have not failed to influence the minds of many, and it seems an inevitable conclusion from the existing indifference or hostility to Christianity that many have reached the conclusion that they, at least, can do without it. Nor is it easy to overestimate the unsettlement created by "the lurking doubt," even though conclusions hostile to Christianity are not reached. Of course, there are always to be found those who console themselves with agnosticism, or divert their minds

from the real issues by reliance upon what they term "authority." This discussion, however, being an appeal to reason and to "a right judgment in all things," will only seek, and can only expect to receive, the attention of those who wish to know and to follow "whatsoever things are true."

All will agree about the importance of the question in hand. It will be granted that Christianity—whatever view we may be inclined to take of its claims and of its prospects — stands as a great historical religion, and possesses to this day great influence. If it stands in the way of a genuine understanding of the meaning of life, no amount of prestige either can or ought to stand against its relegation to its rightful place. If, on the other hand, it can fairly be shown to be either indispensable or even of exceptional value for humanity at the present time, we ought to get to know if that is really the case.

It must be granted at the outset—and the fact is of much greater importance than is often recognised—that many find their attitude of mind regarding the question under discussion complicated with another. They are by no means sure what Christianity is. Exponents of Christianity cannot be altogether cleared of responsibility for the prevalence of this uncertainty. In illustration of this difficulty, and in justification of this attempt to meet it, I venture to quote an effective and revealing passage from a

sermon preached by Canon Barnes and reported in the press :

" Let me, for example, give a conversation which has remained in my mind. I was talking at a Student Movement Conference to a girl—she will forgive me mentioning the conversation, for I have forgotten both her name and University — who was much troubled by the question of evolution and her own loss of belief in the early Genesis narratives. I explained to her that I did not personally accept these remains of primitive thought, and that they were in no way vital to, or even of importance in, Christian belief. She asked me : ' But why do you not say so publicly ?' I replied that I had said so repeatedly. She looked at me quietly and asked : ' May I say what is in my mind ?' ' Please do.' ' Can you not say it a little more loudly ? It would help so many of us.' "

My sympathy is with Dr. Barnes's questioner at least as much as with those spokesmen for Christianity who fail to make their voice heard. The extract also sheds a light upon the whole question of the value of Christianity and of its presentation for the modern mind. No more imperative task and duty lies at the present time before exponents of Christianity than that of giving expression to the basis and contents of the religion which they profess to believe, and which both by the clamant need of the age and by the genius of that religion they ought

to make available for honest and impartial thinkers. This task simply must be performed, notwithstanding difficulties which are greater than most people realise, and which are quite insuperable by the antiquated dogmatism of those who have forgotten the last command of the Founder of their faith. If those who repeat merely outworn phraseology and ideas would call to mind the religious and moral obligation resting upon those who profess to obey a Master who spoke words of warning to any who would make "void through traditions" the present truth, some deep-seated misconceptions might, if not too late, yet be removed. There is also a prophetic warning which tells of a candle which might be "removed," whereunto we shall do well to take heed. The house of those who are unmindful of the difficulties of the thinking young people of the present day is by no means frequented: the danger is that it may "be left unto you *desolate*." If there are any to-day who are at ease in Zion, it must be because the killing "letter" has stifled the quickening "spirit."

The question which we are to consider in the light of contemporary enquiry is not one that can be left to "the perilous contingency of uninstructed thought." I hope to keep that consideration well in mind, though it does but emphasise the difficulty of a task which, in any case, and for any person, is most exacting. So I will without more ado say that

I have tried to do my best in this brief discussion, and need all that encouragement which can come from the good-will of my readers, and from the fact that many have been so good as to say that some earlier writings of mine have proved of use. May we excuse ourselves from an elaborate and detailed treatment of the question, while at the same time we try to grasp all that is *essential and of real importance*. Without being too concise, it may be possible to go to the root of the matter, and to find the light we are seeking. Perhaps it may save me from undeserved reproof and my readers from some disappointment if I say at once that I am very conscious of my limitations, and have tried to reduce them to the best of my ability. My readers have my sympathy, but I can assure them that I have tried not to be "obscure," though, with the best intentions, I have not attained much success in that direction. I may be allowed to say, in mitigation of my sentence, that after all some of the points upon which we shall be bound to touch have their own distinct difficulty and complexity, and cannot be stated in the phraseology of the tales "as told to the children." A writer on such a question as this may fortify his spirits by the consideration that the readers who are really interested do not need feeding with "the milk for babes," and have already been more than "fed up" with that doubtful luxury.

The difficulties which many people have regard-

ing Christianity do not by any means always rest upon what Christianity possesses in virtue of being Christian, but upon something which it possesses in common with all positive and historical faiths. The difficulty arises from the fact that it is a religion. So many consider that they must dispense with Christianity simply because they feel that they ought to dispense with religious beliefs of any and every kind. Such persons frequently seek to embellish whatever views they may possess with certain ideal features which show how hardly the religious sentiment dies, but that slight inconsistency generally passes unnoticed.

Most of those who feel that they are, on account of what they hold to be a necessary deduction from the "scientific" view of things, precluded from religious belief are certainly not precluded from some definite convictions and positive beliefs. They have an assured confidence that scientific knowledge demonstrates the truth of Materialism, and excludes all enlightened minds from the possession of religious beliefs.

It is only right to say straight away that this trust in the materialistic hypothesis is misplaced. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Materialism, though never logically established, could claim the support of great names. It shouted on the housetops that the riddle of the universe had been solved, and that everything had been reduced to mechanical

and chemical processes and laws. All that confidence has now gone. No responsible scientific enquirer now argues for the positions advanced in earlier years by Haeckel and Loeb. In the light of contemporary knowledge Materialism as a professedly complete account of the origin of life and mind is a disproved and useless assumption. It is only fair and impartial, when we are with perfect justice complaining of a certain slowness, in the past and to some extent in the present, on the part of theologians, in expressing their ideas in terms justified by modern knowledge, to state that they are not the only offenders. In many instances impartial scientific investigation, especially in biology, was hampered by the quite unwarranted preconceptions of Materialism. All that is now over, and may not be pure loss if it teaches both sides to go more warily in the future.

The real position of contemporary knowledge in science and philosophy is stated in Dr. Pringle-Pattison's chapter on "The Liberating Influence of Biology" in his Gifford volume: "There can be no doubt that the twentieth century opens with a very remarkable revival of general interest in philosophy: and it is not the least hopeful sign of this movement that the impulse has come not so much from the professional philosophers as from men of science, in virtue of insights reached and problems raised in the progress of scientific thought. . . . I

have tried in this lecture to trace the liberating influence of biology in helping to bring about this changed attitude of mind. The revolutionary discoveries in physics that have marked the turn of the century have also, I think, by the sense of new horizons which they have given us, powerfully helped to mature a more philosophical view of the nature and function of physical concepts and laws. In view of the sudden transformation which has overtaken the very elements of the old physical scheme, there has been reborn the confidence that experience is richer than any of the formulæ in which we have sought to confine it."*

The liberating influence of contemporary science is not restricted to biology. When they come to the study of human individuality, investigators find that no complete account of their subject matter can be given from the standpoint of biology alone. Thus they begin to operate with a new order of facts necessitating a *scale of values*. It will be as well if we take note at this point that the principle of *degrees in value* is a necessary concept for a philosophy of science, and is used in description of the reality with which, in its place and degree, each distinct science deals.

Even wider and more liberating still in its effect upon contemporary knowledge and interpretation is the principle of relativity. The revolution made in

* Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 86 *f.*

physical concepts and the expansion of mathematics effected by use of this principle—its applications in astronomy and in relation to the space-time continuum—bring science into occupation of realms where the concepts of pure thought verify themselves to observation. Scientific knowledge is brought to the borders of metaphysics, if not even right over them, and, in Viscount Haldane's playful phrase, "the mathematicians are kicking the philosophers up their own hill."

We are a long way from the era of Haeckel now. It almost seems unkind to mention it. What a distance from Loeb to Einstein! The idols of the Materialists look very pallid in the fierce light of Einstein's calculus. "It is only in a shower of metaphors that we suggest as explanatory of what is actual the ideas of the world of the pure physicist. Such a world is no real world."* The pity of it is that so many are still overawed by the Materialist and his copious metaphors. The secularist orator in the public park still finds them a useful stock-in-trade, but for an intelligent member of society to be swayed by them to-day is, from the scientific standpoint, an anachronism.

The disproof of Materialism does not, of course, by itself establish the truth either of religion in general or of any particular religion, but *it does set the question in wider relations of thought,* and

* Haldane, *Relativity*, p. 189, second edition.

leaves us free to enquire into the force of whatever evidence religion or religions may have to offer.

The real difficulties for a mind in touch with contemporary scientific thought do not lie in the direction of Materialism, and my sole reason for touching upon this preliminary aspect of our topic is because in quite unexpected directions the influence of past modes of thought in science still acts against the unprejudiced examination of this and kindred questions. The real bearings of recent enquiry in biology and in psychology have not yet percolated down to the masses, and even among the better educated there are still to be found those who are not more than sufficiently awakened regarding these bearings. The whole subject of the revolution in thought created by modern concepts and attitudes of mind brought about by recent enquiry and discovery in biology and in psychology is of great interest, and may be pursued by aid of such books as Professor J. A. Thomson's *System of Animate Nature,* Viscount Haldane's *Reign of Relativity,* Dr. Pringle-Pattison's *Idea of God,* and in a most interesting account of recent scientific and philosophical thought given in Dr. Tudor Jones's *Spiritual Ascent of Man,* to which the Master of Balliol has prefaced an interesting introduction.

The contemporary stress upon, and vindication of, the principle of Value is of the greatest importance for a full appreciation of the present position regard-

ing philosophy, science, and religion. When we are concerned with value we are concerning ourselves about meaning and reality. Judgments of value are not merely matters of private opinion possessing only subjective worth. The thing that matters about them is, are they correct valuations? —that implies a *standard*.

The full bearing of the discovery of truth and reality by use of a sound scale of value is obscured whenever a false separation is made between "fact" and "worth." The valuation involved in the most elementary criticism rests upon, and implies, the objectivity of the standard of criticism—that is to say, of value. The values have no private scope of reference: they describe reality, reveal its characteristics, and give us information regarding the unseen structure of the universe.

The use of the judgment of value, in its objective reference, begins in the scientific study of the most elementary aspects of appearance. And as we pass higher on the ladder of knowledge and try to gain a total view of the meaning of all the knowledge which we have received, not only do we find that valuation is involved in the recognition of difference, but we also find that the principle of value directs and controls all our gaining of meaning, all our progress in interpretation. Comparative Valuation inheres in all classification of concepts, and to gain a correct scale or gradation of categories is the

supreme task of a genuine theory of knowledge. The use of valuation persists through all the sciences—from chemistry up to biology and still on, through psychology up to philosophy, the *scientia scientiarum* in which we gain a total view.

In discovery of the lines of intrinsic value we are lighting upon the structure of reality. In using an objective scale of values we are obeying Reason's absolute commands: "Our sense of value is not a matter of selfish preference or individual desire: the judgment of value is as impartial as it is unhesitating. It is as objective in its own sphere as a scientific judgment on matters of fact. On points of detail the sense of value may be open to criticism and susceptible of education, just as scientific statements are open to revision. But in its pronouncements as to what possesses value and what does not—in its recognition of the main forms of value, and in its general scale of higher and lower—it represents an unswerving conviction which is, even *prima facie*, at least as important an element in the philosophical question as the scientific theories on which Naturalism builds, and which, if the scope of those theories can be shown in a truer light, may well be of determining significance for our conception of the ultimate reality."*

Released from the limitations imposed on it by Materialism, the enterprise of contemporary thought

* A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 41.

takes its point of departure from the wider outlook enforced by "the emancipating influence of biology"—to use Dr. Pringle-Pattison's terminology. This emancipation, however, is only the prelude to a still wider liberation from the naturalistic prejudice, and is fortified by all that a sound judgment regarding human values and human "personality" teaches. From the ideal of Truth we pass on to the concurrent ideals of Beauty and Goodness. Nor do we rest even in the contemplation of these absolute worths with all their manifestation of Reality and Truth. The impulse towards a unification of thought and life drives us towards that Unity which embraces the three systems of values, and which in its unity transcends them. So the mind passes upward upon the great ascent and gets to a Reality which is more comprehensive and more real than any experience of a finite "self" can possibly be. *At no stage of the ascent is the scientific attitude of mind abandoned but under the pressure of logic,* "the impulse towards totality"; in Bosanquet's famous phrase, *Reason leads on* the reasoning being to the Absolute.

"If we transcend the outer-world by our convictions we come to God; if we transcend the social world we come to immortality; if we transcend our own inner sphere and link it with religion, we come to the belief in providential leading. In every one of these conceptions, the world of things and of men

and of duties is developed into a system in which the logical, æsthetical, and ethical demands are unified, in which the causal events of the universe and the moral duties and the desire for happiness are no longer in conflict. Religion, too, can speak a hundred languages, as the logical, æsthetic, and ethical demands which must be harmonised may vary from man to man, from time to time. But the value of the conviction that the reality in which we live, if we knew it completely, would be perfectly harmonious in the totality of its demands, is eternal and absolute."*

Not to the domain of things in space and time do the eternal Values, the absolute Ideals of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth belong, though here and now they—themselves everlasting—may be known, admired, and sought. In their nature they are timeless and their habitation is in the Absolute and Real. "Our world of fact may, for anything we know, be one of the least pieces of reality, and there may be an indefinite number of other real worlds superior to our own. . . . Our world and every other possible world are from one side worthless equally. As regions of mere fact and event, the bringing into being and the maintenance of temporal existence, they all alike have no value. It counts for nothing where or when such existence is taken to have its place. The differences of past and

* Münsterberg, *Science and Idealism*, p. 65.

future, of dream and waking, of 'on earth' or elsewhere, are one and all immaterial. Our life has value only because and in so far as it realises in fact that which transcends time and existence. Goodness, beauty, and truth are all there is which in the end is real. Their reality, appearing amid chance and change, is beyond these and is eternal. But in whatever world they appear, that world so far is real. . . . 'For love and beauty and delight,' it is no matter where they have shown themselves, 'there is no death nor change'; and this conclusion is true. These things do not die, since the Paradise in which they bloom is immortal. That Paradise is no special region nor any given particular spot in time or space. It is here, it is everywhere where any finite being is lifted into that higher life which alone is waking reality."*

One might well wish to conclude our extracts illustrating contemporary thought dealing with reason's final problems with the profound and beautiful words of F. H. Bradley. But to conclude this section with words that emphasise the call of the Ideal to our own personal allegiance and response, I quote the following: "And how do we stand now? That the present world and progress on the plane of the present world do not and never will meet our highest needs—about this there is little question. But where in what is, in what we have so far

* F. H. Bradley, *Truth and Reality*, p. 468 *f.*

attained, can we discern those eternal values that point upwards and beyond this present world? Surely in all that we find of the beautiful and sublime in this earth on which we dwell and the starry heavens above it; in all that led men long ago to regard nature as a cosmos; in all that is best and noblest in the annals of human life: in these very needs themselves that the seen and temporal fail to meet; and, above all, in that nascent sense of the Divine presence which constitutes the truly religious life, and converts faith into the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

So we reach the highest point gained in the ascent towards knowledge guided by Reason's light. So does genuine insight enable us to take up our task and to explore the testimony and characteristics of Religion. Considerations of space prevent any extended treatment of the substance of contemporary thought regarding Reason and Religion, and I have only just touched upon that thought sufficiently to point out the directions in which we may hope for light.

* Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 449 *f.*

II.—THE CRITERION OF VALUE IN RELIGION

There is such a criterion—it is implicitly present in the minds of all who raise the question seriously.

There is such a criterion, because there is a precise problem of religion.

A religion possesses value in the degree in which it can impart strength for the task of personality.

Our brief survey of the main directions of contemporary thought has sufficed to show us that for the real mind of the age—for the mind trained in science and in philosophy even more than for the popular mind—*the question concerning Christianity rises as the question of its rank or status as a religion.* Forced beyond the narrow materialistic outlook, the question gains its place in the *wider setting* determined by the rise of more idealistic concepts. It now takes the form—what is the place of Christianity among the religions of mankind? The great practical and speculative considerations for thinking men to-day are—ought Christianity to be relegated to a position of more or less equality with other cults? or, does the Christian religion possess absolute value? or, is this and are all other religions but a stage on the road to philosophy as the consummation of or reasonable substitute for them all?

Such questions get at the heart of the matter. It is with reference to such questions that our subject rises as a real problem for careful thought emancipated from the materialistic limitation. It also rises thus as a genuine issue for life and for personal decision. It will be in the interest of our enquiry if we fix in our minds this, the crux of our question.

* * * * *

The mind of the age centres upon this as the issue. Christianity itself takes up the challenge on this issue. It claims to be absolute or nothing. As a consequence of its claim to be absolute it is unwilling to be absorbed into a wider synthesis which would be something other than itself. It claims absolute value exclusively as well as inclusively. Nor is its claim limited to the assertion of the absolute value of its leading ideas. *Its claim to be final in theology rests upon its still more exacting claim to be absolute and final as religion.* The claim which it makes for its doctrine is made for a more radical reason than the systematic affiliation of concepts. Its claim goes down to the very last allegiance of the soul where no finite interest has the least right or chance of entrance. It affirms concerning its Founder not merely that He makes known to us the last truth of reality, but that there is "no other name whereby we must be saved." I have stated the matter thus, without reserve, so that we may have the real issue before us.

It is clear, then, that the question of the indispensableness of Christianity is at root the question of its absoluteness. It is clear that when it is held that some other religion may in the future take the place of Christianity a serious and significant objection to Christianity in the present is advanced. It is, however, equally subversive of the characteristic position of the Christian religion to consider that it may be absorbed into some general synthesis.

The question of the rank of Christianity as a religion is one which seems, at first sight, to rest upon many considerations and to demand prolonged and involved enquiries. Nor would it be possible to deny that, in a profound sense, such an impression is well founded. Still, just as the scientist may state the leading results of his prolonged and painstaking investigations in a brief paper, it may be possible in the science of religion to state succinctly the main principles and decisive factors of a great topic.

I allow that my enterprise is difficult, and that I may appear to have set myself a task which it is folly to attempt in a brief essay. I think, however, that there is a possibility of reversing the well-known danger of not seeing the wood because of the trees without quite falling into the other disability of not seeing the trees because of the wood.

Dr. Pringle-Pattison devotes his Lecture XII. in his *Gifford Lectures* to "The *Criterion* of Value." He there deals with the "logical principle of non-

contradiction, or to express it more largely, the principle of intellectual coherence," as the necessary touchstone or test of all proposed theories about the "ultimate realities," and about all with which philosophy should be concerned. That principle maintains its efficacy throughout all attempts towards a total view, and itself requires that in such a view all the subordinate interests that are to be co-ordinated should hand on their real and permanent meanings and thus contribute to the inclusive value of the whole. There is a special significance in Beauty, and Goodness has its own distinctive value and meaning, and these have their own *criteria* within their own spheres in their subordination to that synoptic view of all principles and values at which a philosophy of truth and reality is bound to aim. *Religion also has its own distinct criterion.* There is an appropriate and necessary test, a means of estimating the value, of all religions and of religion in general. The amount or degree of value possessed by any religion must be ascertained by means of this standard measure.

This fact encourages us in the venture we are making. We are seeking to estimate the worth of Christianity as a religion, and there undoubtedly exists some definite and readily ascertained standard measure of religious value.

Those who consider that Christianity is a spent force, and those who consider that its "best is yet

to be," are equally bound to test the rational worth of their convictions by the suitable criterion of value. Indeed, all who seriously consider such questions already hold in their hands the measuring rod which can measure up the city. *A scientific and objective attitude of mind in the study of religions* not merely requires, it also *implies the possession of the suitable principle for estimating the comparative worth of the very mixed materials presented before the valuer of such materials*. The criterion may require to be drawn out explicitly, and it may need discriminating use, but it is there in the mind, implied in the possibility of the scientific comparative study of religions. If there were no such criterion, such study could neither be scientific nor yield any positive results. We may be quite sure that no scientifically minded person would enter upon the critical and unprejudiced investigation of religion and of systems of religious cult and thought, except in virtue of methods of enquiry and canons of criticism which are not of any mere whim or private prejudice, but which are universally applicable, valid and necessarily true.

Is it possible to ascertain what is the standard measure of religious value which is at one and the same time the ideal and the possession of all critical and fair-minded investigators? The conviction underlying all scientific enquiry relating to the topic under discussion in this little volume, and relating to all investigations in the comparative and scientific

study of religions, is that there are certain well-defined human needs which religion satisfies, and that religions must be graded according to the degree in which they are competent to meet these needs. In other words, *there is a criterion of value in religion just because there is a precise problem of religion.* There is something which a religion is expected to do for a man. The better the religion does this, the higher its place in the scale of valuation of religions. An ideal religion would do it perfectly.

* * * * *

We are to enquire, then, what any and every human being ought to seek from a religion suitable for humanity, what he gains from any religion in so far as that religion has religious value. We are to discover the factors of the universal problem of religion. The problem of religion is the problem of the attainment of a genuinely free individuality, the problem of the means of a man becoming truly himself. What a man most definitely is gives rise both to his religious need and to his religious demand. We are incurably religious because we are men. We are "selves," "persons," and at once we imply both a conflict and a contradiction. We are not "things," and we are not as much "selves" as we ought to be and might and may be. There is on account of our status a conflict; we are not things,

and yet how hard it is not to slip into the state of being a thing!

Religion rests upon this standing of the soul, upon this conflict, and upon this contradiction of the self by things and by itself in its weakness. It is so easy to slip into this depreciation of our standing. The individual, the self, always demands from a religion *power—power* to maintain its standing, to enhance its individuality, to enable it to be more itself.

A religion is of value to a human soul and to humanity in general in the degree in which it can help to confirm the soul in its possession of selfhood, despite the soul-reducing influence of everything in itself and in its environment that would tend to mechanise the soul and to degrade it towards thinghood. The problem of Religion is the problem of the stability and value of the self, and *the criterion of value regarding religions is afforded by the test of their power to help solve that problem.*

The first thing, then, is to see that the soul needs help. To be a "self" means to be committed to a constant struggle against lower influences. To be a "self" means to be this distinct unique individual, no thing, and to have the task of maintaining itself as this unique individual. We are what we are, and we become what we can be, only by regularly overcoming influences which would, if not counteracted, reduce us in the scale of being.

The fact of the task of personality just pointed out is the root of our life-problem and the source of our calling upon God. How many things cry out against this our claim to individuality!—a claim which we can neither deny without contradiction nor maintain without struggles. It seems so exorbitant—this necessary claim of the human self to be of more value and significance than a mere thing. Why not be content with a more sober and humble estimate of the worth of a "child of a thousand chances 'neath the indifferent sky"? So do all things other than the soul cry out against its assured possession. So does our first environment of nature and things witness against our pride.

And what then? When all outward appearance cries out against this creed, does the soul tamely quit the field? No; it asserts and strives to maintain its ground. It seeks and, we must believe in virtue of its measure of success, it finds help "from out strange places" where it has contact with Another and Higher Environment.

The contrast between our spiritual values and those of lower nature which writers like Pringle-Pattison and W. R. Sorley emphasise is well set forth by Viscount Haldane: "A direct and immediate apprehension of the full truth is not possible for an intelligence that is throughout hampered by the moment of the particular, and is itself bound up with bodily organs and with nature. We are in the

world though not of it, and we cannot escape from the external and the contingent. The particularity of the very self opens the door for error and for sin. For, if nature has its foundation in mind, mind has its finite aspects through nature. That is how the irrational and contingent arises and confuses mankind, and that is why the reflective consciousness has a long path to travel towards its emancipation from the deadening mass of what confronts it. But as we comprehend we transcend, and thought, even when conditioned by an inseparable sense of finiteness, is in its nature infinite. By the use of concepts which though always abstract may be not the less true, by the power of reason, it can thus reach conclusions about God as well as about man. For the difficulties and the mysteries have their fount and origin in a limitation which it is aware of, and, just for that reason, is ever passing beyond.''*

If we analyse the content of the consciousness of the typical finite self, in the conditions of its self-affirmation, we find that it has a value higher than that appropriate for a thing, and that, in being itself, it demonstrates both the fact of its determinate task and also its contact with emancipating Spirit. So doing, it sets forth the characteristics of religion in its general form, states the universal problem of religion, and provides us with a scientific test of the worth of all actual and possible religions.

* Viscount Haldane, *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 343.

We do not get a scientific standard of valuation regarding religion by taking the lowest common measure of all the historical cults. The comparative study of religions may help us much *when once we have got the criterion* whereby to rightly estimate the worth of the various items in the very mixed mass of its subject matter. The criterion of value respecting religions must be looked for where we have found it, in a study of the distinguishing marks of human individuality or selfhood. The study of religion could be neither scientific nor comparative without the bringing to bear upon the matter in hand a standard measure deduced from the character of the self.

For, in the first place, it is only by appreciating at its real value the testimony of psychology that we gain the correct valuation of the self. And it is only by the actual uprising of the soul to gain its stature that God is pointed out or shown to be there. The idea of God is involved in an explication of the actual meaning of the soul's place in being.

There is an order of values superior to those of thinghood. There is that which makes the contrast actual. Above all there is the Ground, Source, and Support, of the striving towards the higher. The fact that we are upheld by the over-individual Ideal discloses our contact with a whole realm of spiritual values. There exists a Higher Environment en-

wrapping personality, and protecting and developing the soul.

In the light, then, of the testimony of a critical inventory of the contents of the idea of the finite self in the conditions of its self-realisation, the necessary criterion demonstrates the fact that religions are of value to the extent that they help to conserve the soul in the sense of its own spiritual worth, and to enable it to advance towards the effective dominance of its appropriate values. In the conflict against mechanising and depersonalising influences, against the undue extension of the first and lower environment, *a genuine religion does emancipating and strengthening work.*

* * * * *

It is clear from our enquiry so far that the chief thing to be demanded from a religion suitable for personality is *action—action* wrought upon the soul, enabling it to maintain itself in its genuine individuality and with its characteristic spiritual values. From the religious standpoint this work is viewed as the action of supreme powers or Power operating with strengthening or restoring effect.

The universal problem of religion does not allow of any merely theoretic solution. Whether we regard the matter from the practical standpoint of the religionist interested in the effectiveness of his belief or view it in the light of a critical account of the conditions of realisation of effective being-for-

self, the fact remains that, *considered by itself,* no amount of valuable information can be a substitute for the actual reception of power. If the information regarding the ultimate realities does actually assist the soul, it will serve the interests of religion, but to reduce religion, in its concrete bearing upon personality, to the intellectual factor which is only one element in the soul's indivisible unity in feeling, will, and thought, is to misconceive its characteristic genius. A religion meets the actual situation of the finite individual and of the human race to the degree in which it helps to solve the actual problem of the self and of the race by fortifying both for their spiritual task. This is the one lesson taught by consideration of the place of the self in being, by realisation of the actual tension, stress, and conflict involved in the conditions of attainment and maintenance of the worth and stability of the finite individual. This is the consideration, which is decisive for the enquiry in hand, and for all investigations involving religious value. How far does it contribute to the emancipation of the soul from the usurped dominance of sense and of the "outward" generally?—this is the question to ask regarding any religion if we wish to grade it aright.

The contrast between the interests and values of "spirit" and those of the realm of "things" and of any aspect of "nature" lower than the nature of Spirit, the determinate task of personality, which

makes the problem of religion and gives to the finite individual his own tragedy and opportunity; the abiding contrast which compels us to maintain an unceasing warfare if we would hold on to all that we are; *the contrast into the recognition of which we advance to the extent to which we, as individuals and as a race, make any real progress,* is not voided but definitely and with growing precision enhanced, not in fact but in recognition and in impressiveness, as knowledge spreads and as man grows in awareness of his place in the universe. To grow into intensification of appreciation of all that this contrast and task means with all its tension and with its call for renunciation, overcoming, is humanity's destiny outside of all that may await us in what a fairly appropriate figure of speech speaks of as "the undiscovered country."

On the one hand, by increased knowledge of the great antiquity and lowly origin of the human race, by all that Evolution teaches, by all the evidence, accumulating since the Great War, of the difficulty wherewith we gained, and the insecurity of our hold upon the measure of civilisation which by effort our fathers won—by all that impresses upon us the superficiality of our spiritualisation, we increasingly realise how deeply implicated we are in the realm of animal nature with its values lower than our own. On the other hand, by the very fact that we can and do judge and condemn ourselves for our spiritual

insecurity and superficiality, by the fact that we estimate our human worth and possibilities on a higher level, by our realisation that the strength of practical and theoretic "naturalism" rests upon the weakness of the spiritual life of the world, we show our genuine transcendence over those material values and interests in which, notwithstanding, we are so deeply involved. We have come to *a parting of the ways,* not merely in external aspects of civilisation, but *in the actual spiritual life* of the individual and of the race. A great alternative, a definite "either or," lies in front of us and claims our decision. It has the precision which a definite course of action and choice always involves, and the results which will without fail follow. We must either fall back into an accommodation with "nature" which will infallibly dwarf the spirit, or, *by gaining an intensified degree of contact with the sources of our higher valuations, secure a new orientation of the life of the spirit.*

Progress in human control of natural forces and of mechanical powers does but set forth in clearer outline the firm features of the determinate human task. We are to set out to conserve and enhance our own distinctively spiritual and individual "worths." We have mastered nature by our application of our scientific knowledge, and by our mechanical contrivances. But the vanquished have dictated terms to the victors. The price we are pay-

ing for our triumph over nature is our inward and spiritual subjugation to nature. Our very occupation with "things" and "mechanism" has caused our souls to be fashioned after the image of our "idols of the mind." It has happened to a civilisation which has overestimated the importance of, and possessed its mind in its real citadel with, the economic and material values and concerns as a prophetical utterance tells us of some idol-worshippers of old—"they that make them are like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them."

When such depotentiation of the inner core of life takes place, "the individual withers and the world is more and more," not in the sense that private interests are merged in the obedience to the call of the service of the race, but in the sense of the victory of events and happenings over the spirit. Nature, falsely regarded in isolation from human and spiritual interests, makes then a successful "counter-offensive" against the soul. Our inward being is mechanised.

> "Things are in the saddle,
> And ride mankind." *

The seriousness and deep implications of the spiritual task before humanity, the necessity for a revaluation on an altered scale of our comparative estimates of worth, if the great interests of the life

* Emerson.

of the spirit, the absolute and yet deeply human interests of goodness, beauty, and truth, are to be preserved and enhanced, stands out in clear outline in our contemporary life.

The task before the individual and before the race, if genuine spiritual culture is to be retained or gained (a spiritual culture in harmony with our real standing and possibilities because in harmony with the intrinsic values which reveal our place in being and in reality), is just the modern form of humanity's permanent task. In relation to the individual the task consists in effort towards gaining effective selfhood in harmony with, in dependence upon, through the aid of, the Spirit. We understand the mind of the Spirit from the values which demand unconditional response. In relation to humanity the task is to put the same interests into their proper and dominating place. "We are finite members of the Universe and not fitted to be *absolute* 'ends.'"

In illustration of the clash of values within the soul—a clash involved in all effort towards genuine self-realisation—I may instance the striking treatment of the "double relation," a relation of antagonism and of harmony between "the economic and the religious interest in human life," given by Mr. Clement C. J. Webb in his second Gifford volume. Mr. Webb admirably points out the fact that "the economic activity is the indispensable basis

of the religious as of the other higher activities," scientific, æsthetic, and moral. Yet these interests exhibit a certain " negative relation to the economic interest." When we think of the devoted allegiance of students of science in the pure interest of science, the fact of the " negative relation " of the scientific interest to the economic interest at once springs to mind. Equally impressive is the attitude of the æsthetic interest; in some definite respects, negative towards the economic life. Mr. Webb quotes Francis Thompson regarding the service of the Beautiful:

> " Deaf is he to the world's tongue!
> He scorneth for his song
> The loud shouts of the crowd.
>
> " He lives detachèd days!
> He serveth not for praise!
> For gold he is not sold."

These contrasts and clashes between the scientific and æsthetic values and the economic interests but prelude the still more potent tensions between the ethical and religious values and those of the life of sense. It is important also to note what Mr. Webb asserts, surely most accurately, regarding the difference between a semblance of religion based on a compromise between the economic life and the spiritual life: " We shall do well to bear in mind the attitude of something little short of hostility to the economic life which is characteristic of the awakening of the religious consciousness to the

demand of God upon the soul. We shall not be surprised to find an attempt made to meet the need of a religion which is often felt by men whose activities are mainly directed towards economic ends, without incurring *that breaking-up of the inward harmony of life, that revolution in general outlook, which must be effected before Religion can manifest itself within the soul in its proper form.*"*

The same conflict of values on the stage of the inward life in all its tension, sense of contrast, and call for affirmation and denial, gains notable expression in Von Hügel's treatment of the fundamental issues in his *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion.* In the pages of that work, as in his *Mystical Element in Religion* and *Eternal Life,* the complex, strenuous, vital nature of the religious experience gets a full recognition. The stress and strain works down to that all-controlling difference and friction involved in the situation of a finite individual, as it were, "caught between two worlds." This source of the "hazard and hardship" of finite selfhood has received emphatic presentation by Dr. Bernard Bosanquet in his *Value and Destiny of the Individual,* but one may legitimately feel that it is stated best with its complementary relief in "the hope of eternal life" in Von Hügel's pages. For instance, in his Preface, "the Papers Nos. 5-7 insist upon Nature and Super-nature as two distinct and

* Clement C. J. Webb, *Divine Personality*, vol. ii., p. 66.

different kinds of Good. For myself I do not doubt that a strong and steady revival of a religious mentality amongst cultivated men largely depends upon a renewed grasp of this immensely resourceful outlook."* It is, perhaps, in his notable Chapters VI. and VII., "On the Specific Genius and Capacities of Christianity studied in Connection with the Works of Professor Ernst Troeltsch," that the distinctions involved reach their fullest discussion and expression. The contrast between all "this world ends" and those which spring "from the soul's relation to the Eternal and Infinite" is here stated with most impressive wealth of detail and precision.

Von Hügel seems at times to limit the scope of reference of the "natural-supernatural" quality and contact of the human soul in a very arbitrary way, but his choice of illustrative examples, sound so far as they go, must not be allowed to obscure from use the immense value of an insight into the characteristic of the self which he shares (to mention two contemporary important thinkers) with Troeltsch and Eucken.

I have instanced these cases of recent reference to the dual basis of the soul's affinities and relations because they point out the importance of the point of view involved in my discussion of the criterion of religious value in view of the given task of per-

* Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, pp. xi., etc.

sonality. Abundant confirmation of the fruitfulness of the point of view adopted will be found further, *e.g.*, in Eucken's view of the soul's contact with what he terms the "Independent Spiritual Life."*

The contrast between the human values and the appearance of mechanism in nature (reached by a false abstraction), the fact that the spiritual life is, in its widest meaning, only gained and maintained by a constant bracing of will and effort, constitutes a call upon the finer qualities of the soul. The world of mind and spirit is ever present. There is not only that semblance of reality which gives to "naturalism" its false attractiveness. There is that constant testimony both to the action of the Universal Spirit and to the progress of the finite individual in response to the Spirit which is given in all our human control of what is outward, in all our attainment of meaning, stability, and worth.

At this stage of the mental life a reality is both experienced and used which is higher than the "things" which man can know and use. And when this personal and spiritual dominance of the outward discloses its significance as the true core of personal being, a still higher stage of reality is gained, held, and possessed. In all the triumphs of art, in all genuine mastery of circumstances, in all that from earth's earliest ages has built up

* See especially Eucken's *Main Currents of Modern Thought.*

civilisation and made "earth a home," the signs and tokens of the power of the Spirit, of the soul's capacity and worth, are present and given.

Have we slackened in the race? Have we in this day and generation so come under the influence of that appearance of "mechanism," of those values which are lower than the values which are distinctively human, that we have come to a halt in the "spiritual ascent" of humanity. Appearances might suggest that we have. Let us comfort ourselves with the reflection—

> "Yet seas that daily gain upon the shore,
> Have ebb and flow conditioning their march."

"In the meantime there arises, as modern man with growing consciousness has discovered, a painful situation. Men have drifted from their old moorings, and the new ones which promised the highest happiness do not satisfy. They are conscious of poverty in the midst of an overflowing kingdom, conscious of the absence of a real substance in the midst of incessant activity, and have discovered in the midst of incessant pleasure the absence of genuine happiness. Is it to be wondered at that desire and anxiety should turn again home towards the whole of life: that the question concerning the inner clarification of life should place on one side all other questions and reduce them to subsidiary facts: that the possibility of an inner elevation of human nature—of a self-maintenance in

the midst of a threatening destruction of life—should become the most weighty of all concerns? . . . And if the call to us to return home to the unassailable foundations of our being is heard in no domain more powerfully than in the domain of religion, and to make what we dare not renounce our conscious possession, then the message of religion acquires a totally different meaning. *Then religion appears* no more as a creation of childish fancy or as a flight into some far and alien world, but *as an indispensable helper of man in the difficult and seemingly impossible struggle for a spiritual life*—for a soul and meaning of life."*

I quote this rather long passage from Eucken's *Truth of Religion* simply because it gives most striking expression to the seriousness of the situation involved in the contemporary predominance of material interests. Such considerations go to the root of the matter. Here you have the problem of religion set forth as the problem of the means of securing, for the individual and for the race, our human stability, worth, and higher destiny. Here also you have that primacy of moral decision in the matter of gaining a genuine and individual soul-life, while the intellectual factors in such spiritual progress are not denied, which is the condition of any effective insight into the problem discussed in this little book, as it is of any true advance to-

* Rudolph Eucken, *The Truth of Religion*, p. 57.

wards the triumph of personality over "things," "events," and the "outward."

The recognition of "the primacy of moral and religious interests" in this question does not involve any failure to appreciate either the intellectual virtues or pure thought. The idea of pure thought does not depend upon any speculative construction which neglects the material upon which that thought acts. Thought is not something "suspended in air," nor does it rise apart from the attempt to give meaning to the subject matter offered for its synthetic interpretation.

Of course, there must be thought's final synoptic or total view, but that truth does not exclude, it of necessity requires, a grading of its contents according to a standard. Further, in the total view the significance of the contents of knowledge must be conserved. The principle of comprehensiveness is as important as the principle of totality or non-contradiction. The practical value of a reasoned view of our sources of strength could not possibly be overestimated, and I hope to be able to show, in its appropriate place in this essay, the ultimate bearings for philosophy of the present valuation of our characteristic human worths and ideals. It would be premature to assume that when we come to reckon up the ultimate verities our present valuations must be radically infected with unreality. It would be fatal not to recognise that these present

valuations do actually mark out our present duty and point out the direction in which we may expect light.

There is a "dualism" within experience. If I have brought out any human truths at all, that much is clear. But I have not said that there is any "final" dualism. I do say, however, that *we have in our human experience with its contrasts and resulting strain a genuine insight into reality*. To think otherwise would be not to rise to reason's exalted height, but to fall below the active insight which we do actually now, at this particular point in the pathway to reality, possess. While we keep mere voluntarism at arm's length, it is well, at the same time, to remember that will and emotion have their rights, that they are relatively separable from each other and also from "thought," and that ultimate Reality must be, in its all-inclusive being, not less full of meaning and value than is our present experience.

I say this much because I know I shall be called upon to justify my placing of the genius of religion in its capacity to impart power for a determinate personal task. Complaint will probably chiefly centre against my contention that no body of *ideas* suffices, of itself, for the direction and strengthening of the soul. Well, I have not said that ideas have no value, though one of England's great writers went so far as to call them "pale ghosts,"

and I have implied that for the gaining of personality will and feeling must be stirred in activity as well as, and along with, thought. There must be a certain amount of "thought" in all definite perceptions, and an activity of thought in all exercise of will and emotion.

I am not falling back upon any hard and fast division between the pure reason and the practical reason: in the last issue such distinctions are meaningless. Equally I do not require for my argument any tripartite division of human "faculties" of soul. But a view of experience which does not, in relation to the spiritual life, recognise the primacy of will and the absolute and controlling place both of resolution and of power to make and keep to resolution, seems to me to have missed the mark.

The fact of this task before humanity is becoming more and more recognised as the task itself is becoming more clearly defined, through costly experience, in the present age. The issue before the age is simply whether we are to continue with a mere compromise between contending and mutually hostile interests or for the race, by a profound change of valuation, to rise to make good its harmonisation with the conditions of human worth and stability.

Nor is this rising to a more effective dominance of the soul possible by any mere manipulation of the given factors in a mechanised, naturalistic, and spiritually broken civilisation. *It can only be*

gained by a profound turning from existing standards of interest and attainment, *by a breach with our complacent self-satisfaction,* and by gaining a new and transforming contact with the sources of spiritual strength. Bosanquet well states the negative aspect of the human task when he says: "The most important change in the future history of our race will be to learn, by experience of material progress, the dependence of values on the renunciation involved in self-recognition."* That is an anticipation which all the lessons of contemporary experience unite to establish. It is plain that such a result will require much searching of heart among many who generally are willing to dwell upon the surface of things. It is plain, also, that such a change demands a transvaluation of values which would manifest a spiritual revolution within the soul and in the race.

We are, then, shut up to a view of the position of existing civilisation which makes powerful spiritual sanctions and effects growingly indispensable. *The age of materialistic interests and culture is discredited, and there is nothing before humanity, as a resting-place for the spirit and for the foundation of a stable type of existence, except in the increase of the intensity and competence of the soul.* Such a spiritual change requires increase of power in the soul to overcome existing overestimates of material

* *Gifford Lectures,* vol. ii., p. 321, marginal note.

values. It reveals a situation which only religious conviction and inward empowering of the soul can meet. This illustrates the importance of the question of the effective means of solving the problem of religion. Mere legalism and prescriptive moralism fail on account of their lack of winsomeness and appeal, and because they just miss contact with the inner spirit. *Religion fails only when she fails to realise her rightful pre-eminence.* Whatever real good and genuine progress may yet be the portion of humanity depends, by an inward necessity, upon the degree of our identification with our human values, upon the amount of identification in individual and race with the mind of the Spirit.

* * * * *

The need for religion has not passed away nor has its apology-in-chief been voided. On the contrary, that need is emphasised by our modern situation and by our scientific competence as the deep implications of the human task are disclosed, the firm lines of our destiny, the conditions of our attainment of value.

The distinguishing features of human individuality show that it is in virtue of all his highest aptitudes, of all that marks him off from the animal, that man has sought and still seeks the emancipating contact with God. He turns instinctively to the Source and Guarantee of his distinctive values. Man now occupies a higher plane of knowledge than

his first ancestors, but still the same aspirations and the same needs lead him out from and beyond himself to the life-giving and strengthening Spirit. Still he feels that helplessness before the influences of nature and that weakness of his own spirit which from the beginning have led men to call "above the conquered years." So to call is a sign of man's greatness. So to overcome and so to maintain is the inner history of Evolution. God forms man "of the dust of the earth"—there is enough recognition there of the physical ancestry of our mortal frame and of our incalculable antiquity to satisfy the man of physical science. But what about "the image of God"? Well, let us keep to poetry in order to save ourselves from the dogmatism of the Materialist. Perhaps after all we do not render a complete account of any man by a description of his physical clothing. Evolution is an excellent word whereby to cloke our inevitable acknowledgment of God. The upward urge which makes an ascent of man has continually said to the spirit in its conflict with its dust: "Come out of it."

> "This way have men come out of brutishness
> To spell the letters of the sky and read
> A reflex upon earth else meaningless.
> With thee, O fount of the Untimed, to lead;
> Drink they of thee, thee eying, thee unaged
> Shall on through brave wars waged."*

* George Meredith, *Poetical Works*, "Hymn to Colour," p. 364.

III.—CHRISTIANITY TESTED BY THE CRITERION OF RELIGIOUS VALUE

The characteristic features of primitive Christianity—Resting on a sufficient sign of the worth of the finite individual—The validity of the claims—"We can get back and feel the greatness of Jesus": the religious value of His example: the absolute religious value of the Deed of Redemption—No merely theoretic solution is adequate.

In the foregoing pages we have investigated the dominant and constant features of the problem of religion, and have discovered *the standard measure of religious values*. Religions must be graded according to the degree in which they are fitted to enable the self to achieve its determinate and characteristic task. The problem of religion is the problem of the finite individual in the definite and given conditions of its self-recognition. The problem of the soul is how to make good that unique individuality which is at once its very own possession and its abiding possibility. The task before it is to conserve and enhance its grip upon its own worths, to hold fast and retain the distinctive values of the Spirit, despite counteracting lower values. These lower values are right enough in their place. The difficulty is to keep them in their place, and to keep the higher values at the top. In view of this

the essential requirement is adequate strength of soul. Truly to be itself the soul needs to find and to use the strengthening Environment of the Spirit.

The general significance, scope, and range of the principle of Value has been broadly and briefly pointed out. Its field of reference in relation to our topic is evident. It is involved in the very idea of any comparative science of religions, and in the formation of a philosophic view of the meaning of religion. There is a science of comparative religion simply because there is a conflict of values on the arena of the self.

* * * * *

We are now to seek to estimate the work of Christianity according to that criterion of value in religion which has been disclosed. Does Christianity make any distinctive contribution to the solution of the universal, the characteristically human, problem of religion? If so, does its contribution amount to an absolute or complete solution of the problem? A decisive answer to the question which prompts this enquiry rests upon decisive answers to these questions. Upon these considerations turns the possibility of proof or disproof of the truth and value, the finality and indispensableness, of the Christian religion.

It will be apparent, from the actual implications of the religious problem, that the centre of gravity here is not in any merely theoretic system of ideas. The

interests are vital, have to do with our means of gaining our true place in the spiritual world, and concern our fulfilment of the conditions of our worth and stability.

The initial stage of Christian belief is mirrored in the sermons of Peter as these are presented in the Book of Acts. There are, of course, sources of this belief in a history which lies behind the belief itself. Still, as a religion marked with its own characteristics, the first stage of Christianity is reflected in the earliest Epistles and in portions of Acts. These writings inform us regarding the convictions of the first Christians. The Gospels arise later and are an outgrowth of that faith which marks Christianity from the time when it starts as a faith possessing its own features.

The earliest stage of belief appears as a great stirring of confidence and thought at an initial stage. This, by itself, lends an authentic touch. The man who does not feel in contact with an historical situation in these earliest records must be lacking in historical sympathy and insight. Confronted with a great and new position of affairs, the first Christians are beginning to appreciate the bearings of the situation.

It is as a religion of "power" that Christianity first appears on the page of history. The understanding of the situation is very partial and even inchoate, but the effect upon heart and mind and

will is profound. In all the earliest Christian literature the sense of reception of spiritual strengthening is strongly in evidence. These recipients of a new faith have gained a double portion of energy. They are fearless and buoyant. They bear witness with "great boldness" and with "great power." Their efforts are crowned with much success. The contagion of their confident hopefulness spreads, and characterises the rapidly growing new community and fellowship.

There are, of course, indications of a certain lack of proportion and of balance of mind among some of the adherents to a faith yet in its infancy. That is quite what we should expect, and makes us realise with what broad truthfulness the actual state of affairs is represented. These morbid tendencies are but a diminishing quantity in the circles of those who believe, and one in the position of a competent witness claims, without hesitation, that they have received the spirit of power, and of love, and of soundness of mind.

The belief which created and maintained this striking accession of spiritual power is one of the most distinctive elements in the affirmations of Christians from the commencement. It enters upon its career as a proclamation of, and a confident trust in, one who was dead and buried, but who was now alive, and with whom they continued to have to do.

They did not think of their Founder as a literary

figure of the past, but as a personal presence and living force in the present. This outlook dominates their activities and accounts for the characteristics of the primitive literature. Not only the Epistles but also the Gospels are written from the standpoint of faith in a risen and exalted Lord. And they are written with the purpose of seeking to produce like faith among others. That the first Christians possessed this confidence, and that Christianity came into being in virtue of such a belief, is just a matter of historic fact.

"It is not good history to take the first three Gospels and ask what we can make of their story on the assumption that the Crucifixion is the end. One of the factors in the problem, to the most 'objective' of historians, is that a unique movement took its rise from the career of Jesus, that for some reason the most astounding claims came to be made on His behalf by men who had known Him. How far these claims can be justified is a question for theology: that they were made is a fact for the historian."*

"*We can get back and feel the greatness of Jesus.*" The dictum (it is made by Ernst Troeltsch) is true. Its truth is not voided by critical processes and results in study of New Testament history and literature. And it is true regarding the actual literature which we now possess. On broad lines

* *Christ and the Creeds*, p. 214.

and with complete confidence we can realise the impress of the image of Christ in the New Testament.

Twentieth-century criticism has restored to us the authenticity of the bulk of the Pauline literature, of the Johannine Epistles, of the substance of the first three Gospels. When we call to mind the late dates assigned to some of these towards the end of the nineteenth century, the change effected by more recent scholarship is very noteworthy. On the whole, and steadily, the movement of criticism has vindicated those who have contended that there is a unity about the Gospel portrait of Jesus which itself broadly establishes the early rise and substantial trustworthiness of the Gospels.

The change referred to gains striking expression in the recent works of Adolph Harnack. This notable worker in the field of New Testament research, after tending towards positions which assigned late dates, came to a much more "conservative" view as the result of his profound enquiries. He gives striking expression to this change in his own results and to the significance of the change for Biblical study in his *Chronology of Ancient Literature,* which appeared in 1897 :

"There was a time, and the general public is still at that time, when it was considered necessary to hold the most ancient Christian literature, including the New Testament, as a tissue of deception and

falsehood. That time has now passed. For science it was an episode during which time she learned much, and after which she has much to forget. . . . The most ancient literature of the Church is, on all chief points, and in the majority of details, veracious and worthy of belief from the point of view of literary history. . . . The problems arising from the criticism of sources as well as the difficulties of constructing true history will probably present themselves, in a few years, under an aspect essentially different from that they bear to-day, to a majority of competent critics."

Harnack's *Chronology* was followed by his works on St. Luke and the Acts, in which he vindicates the common authorship and the historical value of both. In general and for the main lines of contemporary historical criticism a change in the direction of opinion has taken place only comparable to that change in science and in philosophy which such a thinker as Pringle-Pattison registers in its bearing upon our views of the " ultimate verities."

It is, of course, true that in the New Testament literature there are elements of subjective leaning, and of individual over-emphasis and point of view.

It could hardly be otherwise, since the writers were not trained historians of the modern age, and belonged to a race which possessed but slight interest in accurate biography. Still, just as recent criticism tends to recognise the early date of a large

portion of the New Testament literature, it is becoming increasingly evident that the image of Christ can be sufficiently discovered by means of the actual literature which has been handed down.

The purpose of the writers of the Gospels is not to present us with biography in the modern sense of that term. They write with the selective freedom of the preacher and with the purpose of the missionary. *Nor is the impression made by Jesus limited to the Gospels. The experience of the men of the Apostolic age has its own evidential value.* It is to the total impression, so striking in its inner consistency and living unity, that we should turn. That total impression the New Testament adequately enshrines and bears down to us. Jesus so confronts us in the pages of the New Testament that *He is discoverable there.* The writers have done something which is more permanently necessary than the provision of a biography of detailed accuracy. They have so mirrored Christ in His character and work, and in His redemptive significance, as to give us a knowledge of One who could call forth not merely their worship but their absolute surrender of soul: and they have so mirrored Him that He still bears witness of Himself.

The writers of the Gospels, being men of the first century and not of our century, did not possess our devotion to detail nor aim at our literal and scientific accuracy. They aimed at the "truth of idea" even

more than at the "truth of fact." On the other hand, they possessed in a very high degree the capacity of discerning character and personality, and of vividly portraying what they had appreciated. They may not be good biographers in our modern sense: for that we expect large volumes and not sketches like the Gospels; but they had insight into the significance of their subject, and it lives again in their pages for us and for all time.

History, especially history in its most significant aspects, as the disclosure of personality, demands something more than the precise accuracy of the compiler and chronologist. It needs the creative insight and intuitive vision, and the character-discerning power of personal penetration. History can never be altogether accurate, but it will be nearer the truth of life and individuality when told in broad outline by a man of genius than when narrated in infinite and pedantic detail by an industrious but uninspired collector of facts. The greatness of the New Testament writers lies in their competent grasp and representation of the total impression made by Christ. In their pages He is so made known as He wrought among men, and as He fills the believing consciousness, that, released from dependence on peripheral detail, we can, in our generation "feel *the greatness of Jesus.*" The power to be formally correct and to collect data is of the utmost value, but it is only a preliminary to genuine penetration into,

and to effective presentation of, any life. When all this Bodleian and British Museum work has been done, the actual work not only of history but also of biography still remains. The actual work itself requires the use of the creative imagination, the quality of insight, intuition—what you will. The number of alternative expressions for the same capacity or power only shows its necessity and its firm place in the inventory of our faculties. And only by exercise of this capacity can we be sound historians and reach accurate, valuable, and really scientific results in the depiction of personality.

The careful and sustained collection of evidence is a necessary preliminary, but the actual discernment of character itself, and to a lesser extent the depiction of what is discerned, depends upon a synthetic intuition in which, in one indivisible act of insight, the personality is once for all perceived in its spiritual unity.

Such capacity for the "discerning of spirits" the evangelists certainly possessed. It was their unique, and I should think unexpected, qualification for their task. Would it ever have been awakened if their inmost minds had not been kindled by their great Subject? Was it not quickened into manifestation, if not actually created, by some stirring of the mind, so that while they "mused the fire kindled" and "at the last" they wrote? I give this speculative solution of the question of the source of their inspira-

tion and of their permanent appeal as a solution worth consideration. But in any case they were able to depict the One about whom they wrote in a way that makes the image of Jesus still stand out before us and confront us.

There is discernible a unity in the Gospel picture which persists not so much in spite of, as in and with the different standpoints of the various writers. It stands both as a spiritual unity and as a cumulative growth. Evidently the subject was before them, given to them, not invented and not accreted. And it was built up out of innumerable instances of the effect of the spiritual significance of their great Subject. Such discernment must have been the spiritual result of constant spiritual action. The unity of the composition is so evidently there, as a result of the unity of the character observed, that we can use the total impression to correct details in which the writers have gone too far in their selective freedom, or, like poor reporters, have misunderstood their Master.

The actual Personality requires for its depiction some background. The more significant the person, the larger that setting. Christ has for His necessary medium of depiction no less a setting than the whole New Testament. Nay, more—He requires for anything like artistic and complete self-revelation that field which humanity affords, and all that scope which gives the metaphysician his opportunity. The

actual Personality, in its historical significance, is only grasped as gradually men are by the Spirit shown the things of Christ.

The writers of the early literature and the first Christians as depicted in Acts are throwing out their minds against a great subject which they are trying to master. What they are gradually grasping is the larger final meaning of the fact which is so great as not to be completely statable in one day and generation. We see Christology in the making and the Christian mind growing up in all things into Christ. Out of the same movement of the Spirit grew the Gospels, with all their missionary qualities and selective freedom. You may say, if you like, that, led by the rabbinic Paul, they changed the saintly human figure into the heavenly Christ. You may say so, but you can never prove it, and both the probabilities and the actual positive evidence available are against you. And you are entirely dependent both in Gospels and Epistles upon material in which the view of Christ as Saviour of the World is all that can be discerned. You may make your section of the literature where you will, but you will come across no stratum which will give you as historic fact a Jesus who does not occupy for devotion and for the knowledge of God that place which He holds in all the ages of the Christian Church.

Now, whatever is or is not historical in the Gospels and in the New Testament in general, it is at least

historic fact that a great movement rose from the preaching of the Apostles regarding One whom they confidently believed had broken the bonds of death and had shown Himself alive. That is one of the factors in the historical complex which New Testament history is called upon to unravel. There is also no doubt that all the rich and fertile deposit of early Christian thought reposes upon the conviction that One rose from the dead. It is also certain that "if Christology is to reproduce the Christian certainty, it must define faith in Jesus as faith in Him as the living and transcendent Lord."*

It is very easy to say, and appears satisfying to a certain type of mind to believe, that we must act as Jesus acted, think as Jesus thought. The statement is simple, and for many it seems to clear the air. Still, it is one thing to say so and quite another to get any warrant for so saying from the simplest elements of the portrait of Christ presented in the Gospels. We may assume a view which puts us more or less on a level with Jesus, but it is quite another thing to square that view with the actual evidence available.

"Jesus knows no more sacred task than to point men to Himself. His life and death proclaim the conviction that no man who desires true life can do without Him; everyone must concern himself with

* H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 365.

Jesus, and must take to heart the fact of His Personality."*

Now, that this "general impression" of our Lord's sense of His own place in the founding of the Kingdom of God is actually given in the Gospels cannot be reasonably denied. The critical investigation of the documents which enshrine the primitive testimony does not shake it. Indeed, the more the centre of gravity is altered from reliance upon literalistic acceptance of the Biblical literature, the greater is the difficulty of accounting for the actual claims made by Jesus and the devotion, worship, titles, and allegiance which, both during His lifetime and especially in the Apostolic period, influenced by confidence in His resurrection, were spontaneously and naturally given to Him. If we ask what are "the facts," there are no "facts" more discoverable than these, which disclose how in the souls of those who are responsible for the New Testament writings Jesus occupied a place which humanity has always reserved for God. When once this is seen, however, we get the point of departure for Christology, and for a due estimate of the problem of construction of the idea of God in the light of the chief revealing material. That task confronted the first Christians, and so long as their sense of indebtedness to Christ remains, *it will*

* A. Hermann, *Communion with God*, Crown Theol. Lib., p. 93.

remain our task. If the motives which prompted their Christological affirmation still persist—motives resting upon the place of Christ in an historic and personal redemption—they may be counted upon to lead us to conclusions identical at least in spirit.

I venture to quote, with reference to this phase of our enquiry, some words regarding the "religio-historical" method which I have used elsewhere: "Naturalism in the realm of New Testament history shares the fate of all Naturalism at the hands of modern science and of a critical philosophy. Anything which undermines the basis and presuppositions of the scheme destroys the whole theory along with its results."*

It is, however, a fact, that many who would certainly wish to be guided by the spirit and methods of science still reveal a naturalistic bias when they attempt to deal with the Gospel history. Presuppositions affect vitally both methods and results in historical criticism. Researchers often think that they are dealing with New Testament questions with strict impartiality, while all the time their attitude is determined by a point of view arising from their general outlook.

This matter of prior conceptions is of great importance in Biblical study. We have seen how the naturalistic bias which formerly operated so prejudicially in biology hampered the attainment of

* F. W. Butler, *The Grounds of Christian Belief*, p. 71 *f.*

results and of a genuinely scientific attitude in the study of animate nature. The same bias works both consciously and unconsciously in the methods and results of many New Testament investigators.

We often find that very competent students of the New Testament literature and history arrive at results concerning the actual facts of the life of Jesus which reduce Him to a rank which at least seems incompatible with the broad general impression produced upon us by the Synoptic Gospels. If we add also the testimony of the "first generation of Christians," we may have our initial sense of difficulty in harmonising such representations with the account of the effects produced by Jesus upon the minds of those who came to believe in Him much enhanced. This tendency to "explain by reduction" may even strike us as an explanation which does not explain. We feel that these writers have left on our hands the difficulty of accounting for the historic movement which arose from the facts about Christ.

It would be difficult to affirm that the Apostolic Church gained the estimate of Jesus, which the most liberal theologians must allow, as an historical fact, they did gain, without adequate motives and reasons. "The difficulties in the Gospel record which modern criticism has unearthed, or many of them, are there undeniably: but their importance may easily be overestimated. . . . The uniform

quality of the whole guarantees the truth of the Synoptic portrait: its pure originality constitutes a certificate of origin."*

The historical basis of Christianity is at the root of its competence as a religion. It is not only a fact that "ideas are pale ghosts," and that only in definite historical situations and by influence of striking personalities have men's minds been stirred to great issues: a sign of interest in values higher than those of nature must come to us out of history. The Christian Gospel is essentially a word from above the natural system of values. By it we are given that clear and convincing sign of the conservation of the spiritual values which could only be given by God's own action.

Plainly the conviction voiced in the words "God is love" does not arise from any consideration of the realm of lower nature with its values often so hostile to the life of the spirit. The manifest difficulty of maintaining such a conviction in the face of daily evidence which appears to tell against it reveals the impossibility of resting on any grounds other than those afforded by the supernatural work and manifestation of God. Not only is it a fact that such a conviction is not unhesitatingly proclaimed by philosophy and religion, but it is also a fact that such a conviction must be impressively established and strikingly vindicated if it is to win its way in

* H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 9.

mankind in the mass. "From the doctrine of the Incarnation follows the love of God for the world, the pity and care of God for the weak and erring, the supreme sacrifice of God to seek and save that which was lost. . . . Nor is there any religion or philosophy, except Christianity, which has really drawn the sting of the world's evil."*

It cannot be fairly said that our human demand for an adequate and convincing demonstration that the power everywhere revealed through phenomena is friendly to our highest values is adequately and strikingly satisfied by any other means than the Incarnation. Mr. A. E. Waite, in his *Studies in Mysticism,* gives such telling expression to the need for a revelation which can clear up these difficulties, that I venture to quote some of his words: "We are all of us aware that the 'natural religion' of Paley has failed not less signally than the scientific non-religion of the agnostic. It was said on the threshold of the Christian centuries that 'the world by wisdom knew not God,' nor has it been advanced towards that knowledge by the 'teleology of the watch.' . . . Nature has assuredly her higher aspects, and from these we can gather consolation, encouragement, something of the illuminating message which we need to fill the soul; but Nature herself can offer us

* W. R. Inge, *Plotinus,* vol. ii., p. 208 *f.* (See also vol. i., p. 260.)

no warrant for distinguishing between her higher and her lower part. . . . We need a warrant for hearkening only to the higher ministry of Nature, and for severing intellectual correspondence with her more coarse and sordid part."*

The significance and practical usefulness of the word "supernatural" is often obscured by a quite unwarranted association of the word with the "unusual," the "anti-natural," and the mere "portent." In reality, in a universe in which there are degrees of value and many "systems" at different levels of complexity and structure, the "supernatural" is constantly given and constantly in operation. Take the "realm of inanimate nature" and compare it with that which gives its title to a recent study of living organism, "the realm of animate nature."† The values and characteristics of the animate realm are of a meaning and character above that of the inanimate, and yet they persist in the complex organism along with the chemical and mechanical principles and modes of working. Still higher are those values to which psychology introduces us.

Further, within the actual concrete being of a finite human individual, there are not only aspects

* *Op. cit.*, p. 128. Mr. Waite has in view the "design argument" as limited by influence of the deistic controversy of the eighteenth century.

† J. A. Thomson's *Gifford Lectures.*

of existence which belong to the lower order of values, but also definite distinctions of value in will-attitudes and in personal character. The whole personality itself is of this "natural-supernatural" nature. The bearings of this characteristic of personality are well brought out by F. von Hügel in his recent *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*. In his exposition he follows the lines of Professor Ernst Troeltsch in showing the impossibility of resting in any view of the range of human aspirations and possibilities of development limited by a "this-world ethic."

The bearing of such considerations upon the large amount of eschatology in the New Testament, and also upon the need for "power" and "revelation" sufficing to meet the deepest grounds of our nature, is obvious. And the warning with which Troeltsch closes his study of social ethics is distinctly impressive and to the point: "If the present social situation is to be mastered by Christian principles, thoughts will be necessary which have not yet been thought, and which will correspond to this new situation as the older forms corresponded to the older situations. . . . As little as any other power in this our world will they create the Kingdom of God on earth, as a completed social ethical organism: every idea will still be met by brutal facts, every upward development by interior and exterior checks. There exists no absolute Ethic still await-

ing its first discovery, but *only an overcoming of the changing situations of the world.* There exists also no absolute ethical transformation of material nature or of human nature, but only a wrestling with them both. Only doctrinaire idealists or religious fanatics can fail to recognise these facts. Faith is indeed the very sinews of the battle of life, but life does in very deed remain a battle ever renewed upon ever new fronts. The old truth remains true: the Kingdom of God is within us. But we must let our light shine before men in confident and ceaseless labour, that they may see our works, and may praise our heavenly Father. The final ends of all humanity lie hidden within His hands."*

Such words in their massive insight set forth not obscurely the inner genius of the "supernatural," "eschatological," "other-world" elements in life: elements of the New Testament and of Christianity also in its real qualifications as the religion of humanity.

To grasp the full force of the "rational postulate" of a sufficient sign of the worth of the individual, and of the power and willingness of God to establish the Kingdom of Good, we need some insight into the radical difficulties of "Natural Religion" or general theistic theory in the face of the problem of Evil. One may well question where to find any effective alleviation of this problem short of that which

* Hügel, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

comes by God's manifestation of Himself as He is—that is to say, from above all that pertains to "nature" as that is disclosed to us by science and in experience—a disclosure by invasive action, centralised, impressive, and consoling. An alleviation, I say, even rather than a clearing up: a massive and effective conferring of power to trust, beyond all that appears, the hidden wisdom of God. The problem of Evil seems distinctly left on our hands by any theism which is not grounded on the Christian revelation and hope. We see how those who write from the standpoint of "pure philosophy" stand, as it were, nonplussed before this gigantic issue. As an example I may take the utterances of a metaphysician of unsurpassed insight—the whole of whose discussion of the problem of Evil is full of deep and tender penetration and sympathy. I refer to S. S. Laurie in his two great volumes, *Synthetica:* "There is something amiss." "Humanity bears a cross." As an example of the deep implications of this problem, and of the fact that in this connection *there is an alternative and a demand for light and strength sufficing for the right decision:* *"Consider the alternatives: The world is a world of Divine purpose and that purpose is The Good, as the Dialectic tells us; *or*, there is no purpose either good or bad. . . . Our interpretation of Man, his function and destiny, resting, we believe,

* S. S. Laurie, *Synthetica*, vol. ii., p. 340.

on a scientific analysis of his characteristics and his experience, leads us inevitably to the higher and better conviction. And yet, at times, when the pulse of life is low in us, we cannot rid ourselves of the suspicion that it may be otherwise:

> "'The sense that every struggle brings defeat
> Because Fate holds no prize to crown success,
> That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
> Because they have no secret to express;
> That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
> Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
> That all is vanity and nothingness.'"*

Such alternatives presented before heart and mind —and the philosopher whose words constitute the quotation shows that they do actually rise—underline that demand for further "light from Heaven" which makes a sufficient historical manifestation of God a "rational postulate."

We shall not attain to any real perception of the intensity of the rational demand for "a sufficient sign" of the willingness and power of God to establish the kingdom of the highest values unless we take account not only of the calm, reasoned utterances of philosophy, but also of the literature of protest and revolt. "It is not the problem of evil that makes the trouble, it is the evil itself."† Even if the failure to hold on to believing confidence in "a happy issue" may be due merely to our poverty of

* Thomson, *City of Dreadful Night.*

† W. N. Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 460.

insight and to our weakness of will, still how human it all is, to despond, to let go the fairest hopes!

Perhaps just at the time when the light of the soul is most dim, the best that may be offered to us may be some of those modern imitations of the Stoic creed with their all-absorbing, all re-combining Absolute, with their Reality of which our finite individuality is merely an "adjectival" and transient expression. Granted that this may be a "noble" conception, and we may steel our souls so as to make it our own, still we might find ourselves wondering why this Infinite and Eternal could not have possessed its own essential goodness and worth without all the "hazard and hardship" through which the finite "member of the Absolute" has to pass without fruition and without final reward. In such a mood, granted in the weakness of mind and heart, the real desire of the soul might find expression not in the well-known words of the Thanksgiving, "we bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life": it might rather find voice in words which will not commend themselves to our neo-Stoics:

> "Would but some wingèd angel, ere too late,
> Arrest the yet unfolded roll of fate,
> And make the stern recorder otherwise enregister,
> Or just obliterate."

So it might well be in face of "the king of terrors," were it not for "some more certain word." And

yet, as I have sought to show, there is a turning of the soul towards a hope which Stoicism can neither give nor repress.

> "Would but the fountain of the desert yield
> One glimpse, though dimly yet indeed revealed,
> To which the thirsty traveller might spring
> As springs the trampled herbage of the field."

True indeed it is that in all ages there have been men who through "the consolations of philosophy" have beheld "things more excellent" and gained a strong hope of immortality. Especially is it true that out of the consciousness of the presence of God voiced in the grand words of a Jewish saint and seer of old—"Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden my right hand"—there gradually emerged a strong hope in "answer and redress," the stages in the growth of which hope can be traced in the later prophetical writers and in the apocalyptic literature. Still, it is simply a matter of historic fact to say that the firm establishment and broad sway of the hope "of life and immortality" came by the Gospel of the Resurrection.

If we see this great question of the means of providing a broad sway of "this fairer hope" in its right perspective, we shall not fail to see, also, that it is a matter of providing assurance and conviction, not only for all strong souls including the wise and prudent, but for the generality and mass of mankind neither strong in will nor always full of wisdom. To

make the hope effective among the generality of mankind, to let it have its strengthening effect among those "who sow the corn and till the field," such is the problem not only before the "worker in the harvest-field of the world," but also before Him about whom Jesus affirms, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It is a practical problem, practical enough for any human worker, and, despite all that the idealists may say whose Absolute is "thinking upon Thought," a practical problem for the Creator and Father of all souls. If indeed our Universe is "a realm of ends," and constituted as such by the Spirit of the whole, it is indeed a reasonable thing to anticipate that He will provide the *effective* means of bringing "the offspring of God" to their completion and their goal. That such a broad and effectively influential fact and truth as the Resurrection should indeed be calculated to produce this result, commands the attention of all who accept as an axiom the power and willingness of God to vindicate the highest values, and to warrant and authenticate that estimate of the worth of finite individuality which doubtless we have because our estimate answers to the estimate of God.

The venture of rational faith may reach a point where, at least in principle, the individual may venture to lean, even regarding all the perplexing problems created by the facts of evil and sin, "ever to the sunnier side of doubt." It determines to

trust the reasonableness of the universe. Such trust may not be explicitly aware of its real significance of the fact that it possesses religious value and is really confidence in the righteous character of the Ground of the universe.

Just as at all its stages this venture of faith has been supported by the actual evidence of the trustworthiness of the universe, so it demands and needs in relation to its final venture, its confidence in the face of the appearances which tell against it, sufficient evidence to enable it to make good its attitude. It will both anticipate and welcome all those signs and indications of a deeper aspect of Reality than it at any present time grasps apart from special revelations and sanctions. At the same time there will not be the slightest reason to believe that such revelations and sanctions are anything other than the fuller unfolding of the meaning, will, and power "everywhere revealed through phenomena." The revelation which comes by way of the work of Christ is just the crowning instance of God's continual work and revelation through nature and in all human life. If indeed—and all its aspects and relations prove that is so—the manifestation of God in Christ is one in which "He discloses the meaning of the universe by the manifestation of Himself," we have, in such a manifestation, something which satisfies a permanent human need.

On any showing the need for such a "sufficient

sign" is not one which present-day thought and feeling give any indication of having passed beyond. We get a certain distance along the way to the knowledge of ultimate reality by the use of the principles of "degrees in reality" and of "end-in-view." "What we have to deal with is the continuous manifestation of a single Power, *whose full nature cannot be identified with the initial stage of the evolutionary process, but can only be learned from the course of the process as a whole, and most fully from its final stages.*"*

Now let us take this principle of interpretation and apply it regarding the light we receive upon the problems which concern our highest interests and have to do with our ultimate belief in the thoroughgoing goodness and reasonableness, not only of the Universe but of the Power everywhere revealed through phenomena. Do not let us dwell upon the poignant history of "radical doubt" and the fact that belief even in "radical evil" is by no means unknown. It will suffice if we take as our example of the possibility of doubt, if we exclude the light and hope which come by way of the special sign which Christianity claims to set forth, a quotation not from a pessimist but from a Bishop of the Anglican Church. The "really formidable difficulty" seems to Dr. Gore to be "the question whether, in view of the vast area of seeming moral

* Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 210.

indifference which the universe in its enormous spaces of time and extent presents, and in view of the seeming cruelty of nature and of the mysterious powers which control human destiny, it is really reasonable to believe in a God who is both the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, whose being in some sort nature's laws must express, and who is at the same time Perfect Goodness—Eternal Love."*

Such a "difficulty," both practical and speculative, goes down to the very root of the rational demand for that revelation of God's mind in a way that does not come to us from Nature at her ordinary levels. Such a difficulty states a human need both for strengthening and enlightenment which could only come by a revelation historically conditioned and characterised by its own special quality, directness, and broad popular appeal. If indeed it comes, as Christianity affirms, and as the actual human solace and strengthening which history indicates has been thus conferred, it is but the logical crown and the necessary supplementation of all that it means to say that the "invisible things of God are made known from the things that do appear."

The demand for that vindication of the highest values which the Resurrection certifies is a fundamental spiritual postulate. To add one more to the roll of the world's martyrs does not carry us to our goal in spiritual confidence and trust. We do not

* Charles Gore, *Belief in God*, p. 156.

only need to see human virtue raised to its supreme height and tragic intensity : *we need the assurance that the fruits of moral struggle do not fail from off the earth. We need, above all, to see that God will bring in the triumph of the more excellent things, and that these do, in fact, bear up the pillars of the universe.*

Belief in Christ's triumph over death is foundational in Christianity. Such belief is central and distinctive in the Christian claims. What is the value of such a conviction for religion? At this point, the point indicated by the characteristic Christian outlook, we commence our valuation of Christianity by the criterion of value in religion.

Faith in the Resurrection includes the conviction that, on account of that triumph, *the action of God, always involved in the advance of personality to effectiveness, has entered upon a new and supremely effective stage.* By the Resurrection, and consequent outpouring of Spirit, there is given an assurance of the worth of the human soul which is absolutely needed by the soul, and which we look for in vain elsewhere. In history and by notable and impressive deed God vindicates our values, confers upon the soul power to gain its stature in spiritual reliance upon God. Christianity is founded upon its assurance that by His own act God solves the problem of religion and gives to the soul power to rise to the height of its calling. *In the case of Con-*

science we have, so Kant observes, an Idea of Pure Reason "whose object is a thing of fact and to be reckoned among scibilia." In the case of God's historic act of Redemption we have a necessary postulate of the soul there, and there alone, granted; in other words, by the deed of God in Christ the soul is provided with the means of becoming what it is in mere idea otherwise, and the race is provided with strength to achieve its high destiny as the offspring of God. The speciality of Christianity does not lie, at least not lie mainly, in that republication of eternal morality and natural religion which Bishop Butler emphasises by his *Analogy* argument; it lies in something which God does for us and for our redemption exclusively in the work of Christ, and in the conferring upon us of a possibility of achieving a lofty destiny from which we should otherwise have been excluded. These are the positions which are the sole and sufficient grounds of the absolute, final, and indispensable character of Christianity, without which it were futile to consider such claims, but which, if they can be shown to be founded on historic fact, certainly meet the need.

The absolute value of the work and character of Jesus rests, in the first instance, upon His example. He so met and mastered circumstances and experiences calculated to devastate the spirit, so exhibited man's ideal destiny as the victorious contestant in life's struggle, as to fortify us for our task of achiev-

ing our spiritual liberty by triumph over the values of nature and the world. He supremely illustrates that foundation of religious idealism which Professor Royce speaks of in his last book *The Problem of Christianity:* "The perception of the spirit's power to transform the very meaning of the past and to transmute every loss into a gain, finding even in the worst of tragedies the means of an otherwise impossible triumph."* We see man as the maintainer, despite all hostile influences, of his own values, in Christ. The deepest grounds of religious optimism lie in the religious example of Jesus. "It is a significant fact that no one has ever brought such an accusation as that of treating evil lightly against the greatest optimist the world has ever seen. And the reason seems to be that in the life and death of Jesus the consciousness of suffering and of evil, not as a far-off subject of reflexion, but as an immediate and personal experience, is raised to the highest conceivable point of intensity. It is this certainty of ultimate triumph, this combination of the despair of pessimism with an optimism that overpowers it—nay, that even absorbs it as an element in itself, which constitutes the unique character of the religion of Jesus."†

But though the religious example of Jesus has its own original and creative value, it does not define

* Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 310.
† Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., pp. 109 *ff.*

exhaustively the spiritual significance of His work. The place of Christ in the redemptive action of God creates the problem of Christology, and the example of Christ gains its power from the consideration of Him whose example it is.

On account of our deep and unescapable implication in physical nature, which we, at the same time, in all our real aptitudes, transcend, the actual situation of the self is not met either by bare ideas nor even by an example which merely discloses the immense difficulty of the spiritual task. *We are not strong enough*—our analysis of the factors of the spiritual situation shows that; *we are not strong enough to dispense with the sign* of God's will and power to establish the Kingdom of the values of the Spirit. The human Jesus showing to us our ideal as victors in the spiritual combat does indeed mark out for all time the lines of our worth and stability, but the need remains for a manifestation not merely of our ideal but of the mind of God and His estimate of our worth. The demand for that sign of the dominance of the power and willingness of God to restore, redeem, and renew the soul and "to bring in everlasting righteousness" by establishing the Kingdom—the demand for salvation and new life, individual and corporate, which is an imperative postulate of the self, is only satisfied by the effective Deed of the Cross crowned by the Resurrection.

By means of the concentration of the action of

God at one impressive and significant point in history—that is to say, by means of the effective Work of God by Incarnation—men are given that sign of the worth of the soul which is a universal need, and which we look for in vain elsewhere.

Such a deed, though historically conditioned, has absolute value. At this point the historical and the spiritual meet. The effect of the deed abides as the permanent possession of the race. Its operation is continuous and constant.

The first distinctive claim of Christianity is that, by means of the work of God in Christ, the effectual means for the solution of the problem of religion have been provided and remain constantly available. This constitutes its claim to be the final and absolute religion. It does all that a religion can be called upon to do. It provides the sufficient means, in virtue of an effective sign of God's will and power to establish the rule of the higher values, for a constant overcoming of the influence of values lower than those appropriate for the self. The soul is assured of its worth according to the mind of God, and, strengthened in spirit by the Spirit active in the whole work, *is brought, in principle, to its goal in a spiritual supremacy over things and nature.*

The second great claim of Christianity rests upon the first, and is merely its logical outcome. Absolute as religion, it follows that Christianity is abso-

lute as revelation. God is known by means of that action which expresses Himself. The action which meets all the requirements of the religious situation makes God to be absolutely known.

If the above claims can be made good, it is clear that Christianity possesses absolute value both as religion and for our view of God and the world. These claims can be made good. They can be verified in the only way in which truths resting on a religious base could be verified. They appeal to religious insight dealing with its appropriate material.

* * * * *

Pre-eminent among the historical facts that may become our own spiritual present possession is the great fact of Christ. Christianity rests upon history, but the history itself discloses its meaning, and its actual historic range in virtue of something superhistoric. The present range and full historical actuality of Christ can be only grasped now, as always, within the soul whom He spiritually penetrates: "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, saving in holy Spirit."

Nor can you fairly place any preconceived limits to the spiritual significance of such a fact. Explanation by reduction and by the lower obvious does not explain—contemporary biology suffices to show us that. A negative prejudice reveals an unscientific habit of thought—perhaps it even reveals

a constitutional incapacity. We must allow nature her genuine originalities, and we must allow Spirit her free orientations. "For a new object we might have even to create a new concept."* After all, if a supernatural person, performing a supernatural work, should be manifested in history, the fact would have to be acknowledged. The possibility of a religious absolute already existing simply rests on the truth just stated.

It is only out of history that influences can come which are of real value and meaning for human life. We cannot hope to find God merely by interrogating Nature. It would be useless to expect to find God where we cannot even find ourselves. The broad lesson of psychology is that our values are not restricted to Nature. Within the totality of our consciousness is more than is discoverable in Nature. But *that which comes to us out of history finds us at our depths*. It brings to us indications of the pathway of the soul, and of the life of the spirit. It becomes to us in a living present part of our own mental and spiritual environment. It becomes present when it is inlived—a vast and vital enrichment of the soul.

When we contemplate the fact of Christ, we are confronting the most significant element in history. We then meet the one fact whereby God solves the problem of the conservation of values. In our

* Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 51.

own sphere of life God then, by His own act, meets our own case. At this point the historical and the spiritual meet and become one. In the present penetration of the soul by Christ, as living Spirit upon living spirit, the historic work is wrought upon us.

Such a present experience of the redemptive work of God is of a piece with that experience of Christ which called forth the Gospels. It was not the mere knowledge of historic data; it was the actual experience of the spiritual significance of the Person about whom they were revealing data, the penetration of the souls of evangelists and Apostles by Christ in His meaning for the spiritual life, which gave rise to the literature, and which accounts for its selective and missionary purpose. The very subjective element and features of personal impression in the literature which create difficulties for the literalist are full of evidential value regarding the range of the impression made by Christ. There is a fact basis discoverable in the Gospels, and there are, in places, signs of effort to present correct history: *but the interest is not in history, as mere history, but in the salvation of which it—the particular historic facts affirmed—is the medium.* Then as now, however, the real historical actuality of Christ could only be grasped in virtue of experience of His work upon the soul. The organism of Christian knowledge consists in the Gospel history

and in the primitive or Apostolic experience *and* in the continuance, in the Church *and* in the Christian individual, of the influence of the one Christ whose influence created the testimony and the first experience, and still acts to the same effect.

Now, I do not say that these rational interpretations of the meaning of that historic vindication of our central interests and of our deepest hopes and most lofty values, of which the Resurrection is the sign and seal, do forthwith and without more ado establish the historicity of the New Testament accounts. But I do say that they prepare the mind to approach both the positive evidence for the fact of the Resurrection and the evidence of its highly important place in the belief of the "first generation of Christians," with realisation that *not without sufficient reason* has Christianity centred upon this as *the sufficient token* of God's will, and as the source of spiritual competence and strength. Historically Christianity rose out of this confidence, and on account of it contributed its distinctive gift to the hope and aspiration of the world. Have we less need of that hope and confidence to-day? Would these hopes and confidences long survive the abandonment of belief in the historical basis of this contribution to our knowledge and aspiration? The evidence for the Resurrection is good. Especially if we take the broad and simple lines of demonstration and proof as given in the primitive

literature, the evidence is impressive. But no amount or degree of historical evidence can enable us to dispense with an attitude of mind which calls for decision and response. Nothing historical, nothing dependent upon past records,* can be quite beyond the possibility of doubt, but *here* and in relation to these distinctive claims of Christianity *we have something historical which is also to be reckoned among rational and absolute values and necessary truths.*

Nor is this presentation of the argument in favour of a striking vindication of the power and willingness of God "to bring in everlasting righteousness"—such a vindication as is made by means of the life, death, and rising again of Jesus—by any means made of none effect by the most exacting and critical thought of the day. The argument does not require anything more than the most broad and general recognition of the fact that by many infallible proofs a sufficient number of witnesses were convinced, as an objective truth, that He who was dead had "appeared unto them alive." Such a confidence contributes a perfectly unique strengthening factor to our sources of hope, and is both practically and logically indispensable. It is seen to be thus indispensable when we give full account of the conditions of maintaining in the actual world

* No. Not even that minimising view of Jesus which is given as a substitute, and which has such varied forms.

in which we live and in face of the deepest perplexities of the self, the soul's spiritual competence and its most influential hopes.

If, indeed, as Professor Sorley so finely states, as the conclusion of his incisive discussion of moral values in his notable work *Moral Values and the Idea of God,* "the only thing that can justify the field of havoc" through which the finite individual passes towards its soul-formation and its spiritual competence is some preparation for wider service and fruition, "not here" but "yonder"—and many voices to-day echo the same conviction on rational lines—a problem is stated which in all its practical bearings calls for just that assurance which the Christian revelation and hope is calculated to produce.

Further, there is a more general aspect of this question. Belief in the Resurrection is, for those who are awakened to the real problem of the self as that self is confronted by hostile influences in its "determinate outward," at the root of any *rationale* of history and concrete experience. In the last issue history, the conflict of wills and the steady providential guidance of the infinite Reason, must find its place within the range of the principle of "sufficient reason." It is only by a false abstraction that the domain of history is relegated to the sphere of the "accidental" and "contingent." A philosophy which fails to be a

philosophy of history, at least to the extent of including human history within its principles of "goodness" and "truth," comes short of being a sufficient total view. Such a philosophy lacks comprehensiveness because it has neglected to take into account its most important data and materials. The Absolute indeed may have no history: but then, we are only dealing with an abstraction. What about "God-and-the-world"? What about God, the true idea concerning whom is that He is, in Dr. Pringle-Pattison's words, "The Redeemer and lover of souls"? If we gain this conception and also regard Reality as including the realm of achieved purposes—if, in short, we rise to the idea of God as "a living God"—history falls not only within our finite experience, but also, though with all the difference that absolute insight makes, within the experience of God. The Absolute may be regarded as beyond existence, but God is the most concrete of all existences. But then, the Absolute is only the abstraction which is left when from the totality of existences we have thought away all that provides distinction, movement, and tension. For the living God and the finite centres of experience unified within the one Spirit of the whole experience is a perpetual history. The various incidents close, though not their contribution to the inner wealth of the whole, "the great narratives go on for ever."

> "Never a cry of passion or of pity,
> Never a wail for weakness or for wrong,
> But has its archive in the eternal city,
> But finds its echo in the angels' song."

Now, granted this concrete view of the unchangeable Reality which confronts us and in which we have our part and lot; granted that the "ends" which express the mind of the Eternal are not only from everlasting realised in His mind, but progressively wrought out in time and through history—and on any other view our human experience would be, not only, as it certainly is, partial and in need of supplementation, it would be definitely misleading—granted this concrete view, the "ends-in-view" and "purposes" of the divine Will do not fail nor come short of realisation. History from the most comprehensive point of view is the concrete medium of the expression and attainment of these "ends."

To realise just this is to provide ourselves at once with a sufficient *rationale* of the Incarnation considered as the effective instance of the *action* of God in establishing and vindicating the rule of the values which express His mind and will, and as the effective means of bringing *revelation* by means of the action which achieves His purposes.

Can God, remaining in Himself, add to His own complete and unconditioned experience of all meanings, worths, and achieved purposes—add to Him-

self this also, our human conditioned, derived, dependent experience with its limitations, hardships, and ventures? If He cannot, then He is neither perfect nor absolute, for there are some experiences and some modes of knowledge from which He is, by hypothesis, excluded. But if He were really excluded from them He would not be what, by definition, He is. The transition, at least in thought, is easy. Can He not, by an act of self-limitation, while remaining in Himself, reduce His experience to a human experience, and so carry up into the infinite and absolute experience the experience which is derived, dependent, and even contingent? The Christian doctrine says He has done so, and that "the manger, cross, tomb," say that, in that aspect of His being in which He abides as the Word, He has gained our human experience and carried the significance thereof into Himself. The Christian doctrine, then, in this respect satisfies a necessary speculative interest. It provides us in this respect with a rational interpretation of human history in the light of the central Christian facts.

By this exposition of the axiomatic value of the rational postulate (rational in a universe where the finite individual has certain given conditions of attaining his spiritual stature and worth), I have placed the central Christian affirmations, as logical truths, in a position where their worth and indis-

pensableness are demonstrated. I do not mean that they are simply demonstrated to be indispensable concepts. I mean that, in broad and general outline, the Gospel history, the source and condition of these conceptions being known, is something of which in our minds we have independent proof and verification. *If that history is self-commending, it is so because it comes to us inwardly and is authenticated* to us *there* by the eternal Spirit of reason and life.

This characteristic of the revealing facts connected with the effective solution of the problem of religion has striking affinities with the direct witness to a moral Governor and Master of the spiritual world given in the "categorical imperative" of the utterances of conscience. In the voice of that "stern lawgiver" we have, *in our own immediate experience and consciousness,* the witness to the absolute and eternal realm of moral values. In the immediate and direct witness within the soul of the action and revelation of God by means of the present authentication and power of the Gospel history, we have, *in our own immediate experience and consciousness,* the witness to the fact that God is "the eternal Lover and Redeemer of souls." In the case of the "categorical imperative" we have, so Kant affirms, "an idea of pure reason whose object is a thing of fact." In the case of the present verification of the revealing medium of God's saving action,

we have an historical fact which is a present and active power.

The establishment of the necessity for historical manifestation and action of God for the accomplishment of the ends of the "Kingdom of God," and for the vindication of our highest human worths, is based upon a precise and definite application of what is known in logic as the principle of "non-contradiction." All scientific knowledge rests upon the exercise of this principle. If there is, to use Professor A. Campbell-Fraser's words, a "final venture of theistic faith," it is so because *such a venture of faith is at the root of that confidence in the rationality of the universe which is the condition of all discovery, experiment, and verification.* Faith in the cosmic order is at the root of our knowledge in the physical realm, and such faith involves confidence in the reliability, and hence in the just character, of the Supreme Power. *No new principle is involved when we claim that the postulates which are necessary ideas in order to save our minds from confusion regarding moral reality are necessarily true.* Such a confidence does but bring out the deeper significance of the postulate of rationality, and shows us that our difficulties regarding belief in the perfect goodness and power of God are *not obstacles to belief, but only challenges to further enquiry in a universe which is a universe through the idea of the Good.*

Among such necessary postulates I have sought to show that that historical vindication of our human values and of God's power to establish judgment and righteousness on earth and throughout all ranges of existence stands as one of the most necessary and true. On such lines do we estimate both the value of the historical basis of Christianity and the value of the religion which rests on that basis.

Though, of course, this argument gives us no free permission to do without attention to historical criticism and historical estimates generally, yet on broad lines it does establish the truth and value of Christianity by an exposition of what it means to say that Christianity is just absolute religion. This is an essay in the philosophy of religion, and it may serve a useful purpose if it merely reminds Christian thinkers that the historical and critical approach to Christianity has its limitations and is, at the present day, far too much overworked. It was as a philosophical religion, appealing to reason and satisfying rational demands in a way unapproached by any other system of thought, that Christianity won its earliest triumphs, and the wheel of time and change has brought us to a time when only by exposition of its philosophical value can Christianity hope to win the thinking mind of the age.

Certain difficulties with regard to the "appearances" of the risen Christ, though, it may be, incapable of complete removal, are yet capable of

being almost indefinitely reduced even to "a vanishing point." The difficulty regarding the assumed total contrast between a "disembodied soul"—to use a term which has no justification either in psychology or in Christian thought—and a "physical body" is really based upon the dualism of ordinary uncritical thought. Nor is the value of the confession of belief in the "resurrection of the body" something which contemporary speculation fails to estimate highly. The author of *The Realm of Ends* and of *Psychological Principles*, who is not one who shares common and uncritical prejudices in favour of traditional notions, shows the direction in which the value of the credal affirmation may be to this day recognised, and also the positive interest which it is calculated to preserve: "Any continuity of life with no continuity of either organism or environment seems quite inconceivable. But there is nothing in our present knowledge to show that there cannot be any other mode of embodiment than that with which we are here familiar, and that we have not manifold other relations with our environment than that with which we are familiar."* The writer of these words goes on to quote from another writer: "It may be that in the course of this life the nervous system, by its ultimate habitudes, should form a finer organisation, and that this in the moment and act of death

* Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 399.

should be disentangled from the coarser frame." But Ward does not rest in conjectures of this kind: "More fundamental than any seeming dualism of body and soul is the duality of subject and object in experience, and this means the interaction of subjects with other subjects transcends the opposition of person and thing. It means, too, that subjects are the prime agents in maintaining the so-called physical world, not this the prime agent by which they are passively sustained."*

The common dualism, the distinct severance between "body" and "spirit" which leads on the one hand to a crassly materialistic view regarding "that body that shall be," and on the other hand to equally thin and vague conceptions of the life of the soul in its fuller expression—a dualism which is really Manichean—detracts from our appreciation of the perfection of the whole man, a duality in unity. It is most certainly a reasonable faith as well as a comfortable hope to believe that in changed and transformed form, in the existence of a self which yet is one self through all its changes, the subject may continue to weave the garment we see it by.

So to believe is, as Dr. Davidson points out, not only in keeping with physical science, but directly encouraged by the scientific doctrine of the conservation of energy. "It is also philosophical, for philosophy dare not, save at its peril, ignore the sole

* Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 400 *f.*

experience that we have of ourselves." "This fact was clearly seen by the early Greek Christian thinkers, interpreted in the refined and lofty spiritual way in which St. Paul had interpreted it, in the name of reason and of justice."*

Granted the place of the appearances of our Lord in the awakening of the Apostles to the fact of His spiritual triumph, most of the imagined difficulties disappear with this lessened stress upon the supposed absolute difference between the conditions of life "here" and "yonder." Most of the imagined difficulties are really based upon views which owe nothing either to Christianity or to scientific and philosophical thought.

Christian faith has a vital interest in the affirmation that He who "appeared" was indeed "this same Jesus." The identity of the Person is preserved whether we hold that the "spiritual body" came into their midst, or that the "physical body" appeared. The manifestations served a great evidential purpose, and the difficulties felt by perhaps more than one of the disciples seemed to be only met by provision of a "physical" contact which carried conviction. It is difficult to see how those doubts could have been overcome by anything other than evidence of the presence of the actual body of the Lord which the disciples had placed in the grave. That there were exceptional features in the case,

* W. L. Davidson, *Recent Theistic Discussion*, p. 111 *f.*

distinguishing the capacity and possibilities of the "body of the resurrection," is evident on any view of the existing evidence, but any exclusion of the view that the physical body was *at the time of the first appearances* the body of Him who was manifested is really based upon an over-emphasis of the difference between "the physical" and "the spiritual" bodies. In any case, the physical body was *either progressively being transformed* into "that which is spiritual" *or was invested with powers and qualities which indicate change.* "When the doors were shut, came Jesus and stood in their midst." No simple or easy statement of the characteristics of a "material" or "spiritual" body of the One who so came is either possible or wise. Nor is it wise to connect the interests of Christian faith with any precise or dogmatic position on such a point. At least the "infallible proofs" were sufficient to change the discouraged band of disciples, dismayed by the death on the cross, into those who, according to the testimony of hostile witnesses, in a few years had "turned the world upside down."

IV.—THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY

What is at stake?—The spiritual crisis: the issues concern our place in the universe; they connect with our deepest confidence in Reason—The exercise and vindication of the highest values—The work which solves the problem of personality absolutely reveals—Christianity conserves its own values when it brings to bear upon humanity the strength of the Spirit.

By unfolding the implications of the universal problem of religion, as the logical problem of the self in view of its conditions of self-realisation, we have established the essential importance of the historical element in Christianity. It is important to grasp the truth that the strength of Christian ideas rests upon the historic base. One of the tendencies of an age which is easily drawn to a crude syncretism is to overlook our obligations to history and the real sources of some of our most common blessings. The value of Christian ideas gains important expression, for instance, in the writings of Eucken in his great work *The Truth of Religion*, and in his smaller volume *Can we still be Christians?* Eucken shows that the ideas which are distinctively Christian are practically indispensable for modern life, and are indeed of absolute value as religious ideas. What he says is quite sufficient to dispose of the

idea that in spiritualism or in theosophy the enlightened mind could find any enduring resting-place. But as a defence of Christian Idealism it is weak on account of its inadequate grasp of the dependence of the ideas upon their historic source. A much more satisfactory presentation of the absolute in Christianity is given by Troeltsch, who, though he fails to relate the work of Christ adequately to the problem of religion, realises the importance of the historical basis.* No firm handling of the question is possible apart from a clear decision as to the place of Christ in the divine work of effecting the liberation of the soul from the sway of natural values.

When once the universal meaning of the work of Christ is disclosed, the absolute features in Christianity can be clearly stated despite all that is provisional and contingent in its past and present institutions. The recognition of the absolute value of Christianity is certainly not incompatible with a judicial and even critical attitude of mind towards the organisations which claim to embody its spirit and to further its ends. Indeed, if this exposition has been followed, we are provided with a point of view whereby a genuine liberalism in constructive thought, and in relation to Biblical criticism and to ecclesiastical development, becomes imperative. Not, indeed, that any mere negative attitude towards

* Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religiongeschichte.*

the historic manifestations of Christianity is justified, but, when we see wherein the power of Christianity resides, we see at once wherein resides authority in religion and also what are the genuine tests of development. The absolute and constructive features of Christianity provide criteria for criticism and guiding principles for construction. To meet the present situation it is necessary to concentrate, but it would be fatal to minimise.

The main features of Christianity as absolute and indispensable are:

(1) The solution of the problem of religion by the saving action of God which is the work of Christ, and whereby the soul is enabled to reach its goal.

(2) The revelation of God by means of this effectual action. The work which absolutely redeems absolutely reveals.

In Christ God is totally present in saving action and completely revealed. The soul is *already, in principle*—that is, in spirit and in truth—*brought to its goal.* This does not, of course, mean anything so impossible as that the soul now possesses all that may yet be its portion. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." But it belongs to the Christian awareness of God to affirm that eternal life is now its possession in the knowledge of God, and that "neither things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This gaining of the goal of the soul involves that God is absolutely revealed. *The soul is brought to its goal in the knowledge of God.* God is in principle—that is to say, in spirit and in truth—absolutely made known. He is no longer "an unknown God," but is, without reserve, manifested.

Such knowledge does not, of course, mean anything so impossible as a complete knowledge of all past and future details of God's government. God is what He is, and will be what He will be, in virtue of His unalterable character, and of that character we have an exhaustive knowledge through Christ Jesus. In such a knowledge we have the supreme example of knowledge of Personality. "In the instance of personal character we seem to find no incompatibility between the thought of a perfection on which we can place entire dependence and that of a living activity, whose course could by no means be settled beforehand, but would afford to the spectator the joy of anticipating ever new and unexpected manifestations of power and wisdom and goodness."*

Our decisions on the topic of this enquiry involve decisive attitudes of mind regarding the chief practical and theoretical interests of humanity and of every soul. Most of the careful thinkers of the day unite with such writers as Eucken in recognising

* Clement C. Webb, *God and Personality*, Gifford Lectures, vol. i., p. 211.

that "we are in the midst of a spiritual crisis which threatens to overwhelm us." It can hardly cease to be so while the philosophical amateurs who write about the "veiled Master," and "the Super-man," and "the finite God," still usurp the place of the masters of mind, and settle with a genial lightness of touch questions which Aristotle and Spinoza found hard to stir. It can hardly fail to be so while it is counted a mark of culture to alternate the profession of the crudest naturalism with a going down to the "witch of Endor."

Ruggiero's observations on the deep-seated weakness and disease of contemporary thought and life do but give telling expression to a disquietude regarding the outlook which hangs like a nightmare over the real thinkers: "The apparent exuberance of modern life is a mere cloak for a profound underlying sterility. There seems to be no longer any limits to the expansion of this life; the man of our time seems to live in a dizzy whirl of energy which is always seeking new fields for its expression. But it is the dizziness of hunger; a strength which dissipates itself—an energy spasmodic because devoid of any real direction. Just as in philosophy sensationalism finds its crowning expression in the working success of the concept, and by a kind of logical opportunism which makes thought simply play its hand against a reality it can never conquer, so sensationalism in everyday life is

expressed in a similar opportunism which induces the spirit, in face of a real world of events over which it has no control, to abandon itself to caprice and swim with the tide. The individual labours under the illusion that in this abandonment he is living in complete harmony with the whole, he is making himself the mouthpiece and in fact the master of the universe, while actually this life of dilettantism means the most complete dissipation of spiritual strength, the surrender of the individual to the caprice of events, not their master but their slave."*

The issue before the soul, in the existing mental and moral confusion, and in relation to the permanent problem of the realisation of individual worth and stability, concerns our hopes regarding human society in the most intimate sense. It concerns our practical affairs simply because it concerns our place in the cosmos. Not until we see this do we touch the fringes of the question of religion and of the present enquiry. The issue, when we ask about the indispensableness of Christianity, is about the possibility of rising as individuals and as a race to our spiritual stature.

The spiritual power of Christianity resides in the fact that it alone clearly defines the lines of our true self-realisation, and reveals and makes available the effectual means of its attainment.

* Ruggiero, Guido de, *Modern Philosophy*, trans. by Hannay and Collingwood (Allen and Unwin), p. 370 *ff.*

The factors of the contemporary form of the universal problem of religion are too clearly defined to allow of any halting-place between the thoroughgoing application of Christianity and the abandonment in despair of any genuine religious ideal. The trustworthiness of the religious consciousness in its most significant form is at stake in this question. With the expulsion of religion in its most concentrated and effectual form, in the form in which it meets and solves the problem, all actual and possible religions would logically be dismissed. *The real alternative is not between Christianity and some other synthesis or substitute, but between Christianity and universal doubt.* Our confidence in the rationality of the universe disposes of universal doubt as an abiding place for the mind and soul. Our confidence in the reliability of logical method and of scientific truth rests upon that postulate of the rationality of the universe which is at the root of our belief in its moral order and spiritual unity. The same confidence justifies our assured conviction that in the religion which solves the problem of religion we have the religion which is both absolute and final.

Christianity rests upon that effectual solution of our problem, which is the work of God in Christ. The test of the truth of statements of Christian theory and of the value of organisation is their ability to further the work and unfold the meaning

of that efficacious work. There is, certainly, no place for a Christianity which does not help to equip the soul for its constant task, and it is but an extension of the same consideration to say that there is no place at all for a Christianity in which Christ does not hold for the allegiance and devotion of the soul and for our knowledge of God, the central and decisive place.

When once under pressure of recent scientific observation the mind is emancipated from the naturalistic limitation, the universal problem of religion, in view of the conflict of values, presses for solution as a question for thought and decision. Of that problem Christianity offers a complete solution, and, if its claims can be made good, it is, certainly, the absolute religion. Those claims can be made good by attention to the representation of Christ given in the Gospels and authenticated in human experience.

That an absolutely effective solution of the problem of religion is a postulate of reason, and that the religion which solves it is absolute for devotion and for theology, is plainly evident. These considerations exclude the possibility of any religion taking the place of Christianity and of Christianity being merged in any religious synthesis. *To deny the absolute value of Christianity is to negate the logical conditions of that absolute solution of the problem of religion which are postulates of reason:*

it could only mean that the mind is left seeking a satisfaction which, if it would look in the right place, could be found at any moment.

The strength of Christianity resides in its witness to that concentration of the saving Action of God by means of the unique Incarnation whereby He, by His own saving Deed, confers upon men the vindication of the highest values, confirms the soul, in its estimate of its worth, and fortifies us for our spiritual task. There is a universal problem of the human self in the determinate conditions of its self-recognition, and there is an absolute satisfying of the factors of that problem afforded by Christianity alone. This is at once the establishment of the truth of Christianity and the sole method of apologetic that has the slightest claim or right to be regarded by the instructed mind.

The idea of a world-whole rests not solely upon the theoretic impulse towards a unification of concepts : it rests upon the practical necessity, which is at the same time a rational postulate, of asserting the conservation of our best values. *Reason and Revelation meet in the same conception of the highest good, and the rational postulate of the vindication of the highest values is precisely equivalent to the rational postulate of the historical Revelation of God in action vindicating those values.* These logical conditions of the conservation of values are realised in the Christian religion, and that fact establishes

for all time its uniqueness and genuine absoluteness. *When you deal with Christianity you deal with religion in its pure form, and at the same time deal with the sole means of conservation of the proper good of the human individual.*

A synthesis of Christian ideas with others drawn from other ranges of thought simply means a relegation of thought regarding religion to a lower level, because it means a denial of the rational postulate of the highest good and its accompanying historical vindication. On the lower level of thought than this logical establishment of the truth and indispensableness of Christianity is the showing that all religions tend towards this condition of absolute religion as it is given in Christianity, but in differing degrees come short. Judaism and Islam come short on account of their legalism. Buddhism and Brahminism fail because of their negative and inadequate attitude towards personality. Beyond these there are no religious systems which make even a show of dealing with the problem of human values in contrast with Nature. *To fall away from Christianity, in its full assertion of God's historical action in Christ for the preservation of the highest values, means to leave the problem of religion still unsolved, and to have negated the given means of its solution.* It means, with regard to religion, to fall back upon an irrational position.

No undervaluing of the positive value of religions

other than Christianity is involved in this presentation of the unique and paramount value of Christianity: quite the reverse is the case. The indispensableness of Christianity rests upon that general indispensableness of religion which modern scientific, psychological, and philosophical enquiry and thought unite to make certain.

That the most effective religions are those that most depend upon the personal influence of their founders is what we should expect. It is an illustration of the importance of history and of the "embodied word." In vindicating religion in its most effective and concentrated form we imply the great and positive worth of all historical religions, notwithstanding their limitations and their possible and actual corruptions.

The universal appeal of Christianity rests not merely upon its gift of strength to the individual, but also upon the cosmic significance of Christ. It has a message for society, for the race, as well as for the soul in its solitary struggle and victory. The universal bearing of the work of Christ may be best approached by means of a consideration of Atonement in the light of moral values.

It is in the light of their objective reference that we approach that leading aspect of the system of values which is concerned with ethical value. There is an affiliation and systematic unity of the absolute values of beauty, goodness, and truth.

The universe is a moral order in the sense that it is the absolute order of the values in their unity through their absolute Ground. It is the perfect order in the unity of Spirit. The spring of religion and the source of its supremacy is in this final unity which is an eternal fact. In this truth we gain the distinction of valid religion from moral rigorism.

Still, the moral values have a certain regulative function. The supreme importance of moral value, not only in finite individuality but also in the structure of reality, has found classical expression in Kant's well-known words: "Nothing can possibly be conceived, in the world or out of it, which can be considered good without qualification except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and therefore is called character, is bad." This recognition of the primacy of the moral values leads Kant to affirm that the ultimate purpose of the universe is the realisation of moral good in a community of persons, "a realm of ends." For a recent thinker of a different school of thought, Bernard Bosanquet, "we get in morality the essential and fundamental conditions of perfection. . . . Morality can more nearly stand

alone, and its absence shakes the whole foundation of life and mind."*

Upon the place of the finite self in Being, upon the sources of its value and the lines of its destiny, the moral values shed our most revealing light. The idea of immortality gets its firm foundation in the nature of the soul, the bearer of the supreme values. In relation to this I take the opportunity of quoting from W. R. Sorley's important work, *Moral Values and the Idea of God:* "The one purpose which, so far as I can see, justifies the field of havoc through which the world passes to better things, is the creation of those values which only free minds can realise. And if free minds, when perfected, are to pass away, even for absorption in God, then that value is lost: and we must ask again the question, with less confidence in the answer, whether the values which the world's history offers are worth the price which has been paid for them."†

My reason for thus dwelling upon the main features of the significance of the moral values is because, if we interrogate them far enough, we shall come upon not only a general function for Atonement, but also an ethical demand for that unique work in Atonement which Christianity ascribes to

* *Principle of Individuality*, p. 347 *ff.*

† *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 525. The whole book should be read.

Christ. I have shown, in the earlier pages of this book, that Christ performs a unique work in the vindication and conservation of the values of the individual self. Now my anticipation is that I shall be able to show that Christ performs a unique work in conservation of the spiritual universe, which is a moral order.

The demand for self-sacrifice in a spiritual world is evident to careful attention. We must frankly abandon any view of the world as a "place of pleasure" while, if we are sensible, we shall also abandon any view of it as "a vale of tears."

A passing beyond interests limited to the claim and counter-claim set of values means a realisation of the immanence of the eternal in the present. That advance towards personality, towards genuine self-hood, which is our determinate task can be measured by our degree of possession of those higher values and interests which express the mind of the spirit and disclose a higher degree of Reality. We are capable of such advance: indeed, that is what we are here, here and now in time, to make good. "The conception of an abstract ego seems to involve three assumptions, none of which is true. The first is that there is a sharp line separating subject from object and from other subjects. The second is that the subject, thus sundered from the object, remains identical through time. The third is that this indiscerptible entity is in some mysterious

way both myself and my property. In opposition to the first, I maintain that the foci of consciousness flow freely into each other even on the psychical plane, while in the eternal world there are probably no barriers at all. In opposition to the second, it is certain that the empirical self is by no means identical throughout, and that the spiritual life, in which we may be said to attain real personality for the first time, is only 'ours' potentially. In philosophy as in religion, we had better follow the advice of the *Theologia Germanica* and banish, as far as possible, the words 'me' and 'mine' from our vocabulary. For personality is not something given to start with. It does not belong to the world of claims and counter-claims in which we chiefly live. We must be willing to lose our life on this level of experience before we can find it unto life eternal. Personality is a teleological fact; it is here in the making, elsewhere in fact and power. So it is in the case of our friends. The man whom we love is not the changing psycho-physical organism: it is the Christ in him that we love, the perfect man who is struggling into existence in his life and growth."* "Personality is a teleological fact:" it is such because it is the idea which the divine Mind has regarding us, and which the time process gives to us the opportunity of realising: its centre and its home, however, is not in any process but "yonder," in the

* Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, second edition, p. 275.

eternal realm, where it abides and where it comes into its own. "Nothing whatever besides yourself determines either causally or otherwise just what constitutes your individuality, for you are just this unique and elsewhere unexampled expression of the divine meaning."*

The finite individuality considered as an intent in the divine Mind made actual by overcoming negation and "hardship," in time contributes its quotum to the living quality and intensity of Being. The values are retained by means of the continued existence of the bearers of the values. This, the speculative ground of the idea of Immortality gained through consideration of the regulative position of moral values, authenticates the witness of the religious consciousness in communion and fellowship with Spirit. "The question is not whether the circumference of the soul-life is indefinitely enlarged, but whether the centre remains. These centres are centres of consciousness: and consciousness apparently belongs to the world of will. It comes into existence when the will has some work to do. It is not conterminous with life: there is a life which is below consciousness, and there may be a life above consciousness, or of what we mean by consciousness. We must remind ourselves that we are using a spatial metaphor when we speak of a centre of consciousness, and a temporal one when

* Royce, *World and Individual*, vol. ii., p. 469.

we speak about a continuing state of consciousness; and space and time do not belong to the eternal world. The question therefore needs to be transformed, before any answer can be given to it. Spiritual life, we are justified in saying, must have a richness of content; it is, potentially at least, all-embracing. But this enhancement of life is exhibited not only in extension, but in intensity. Eternal life is no diffusion or dilution of personality, but its consummation. If every life in this world represents a unique purpose in the Divine mind, and if the end or meaning of soul-life, though striven for in time, has both its source and its achievement in eternity, this, the value and reality of the individual life, must remain as a distinct fact in the spiritual world."*

In such "a spiritual world" there can be no place for any merely indeterminate extension of self-interest. In the light of the universe as a moral order through constant overcoming in time and victory in eternity, we, at once, understand the limitations of the hedonistic outlook.

The finite member of the universe cannot be an absolute end. It has its own definite and subordinate place within the totality of Being, but it effectually realises that place in so far as the Spirit of the whole actuates and controls it. There are no private interests and no virtues which end with self.

* W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, p. 276.

The individual has its scope and life only within a spiritual membership. The principle of unity in a universe which is a moral order negates the notion of self-adequacy and self-completion. The virtues of one enrich the common store of good, and the sins of one bind all in the bonds of evil.

The simplest features of spiritual membership in a universe show the impossibility of limiting moral values and morality of the claim and counter-claim character, and straightway exhibit the universal function of Atonement. For the universe both requires and develops virtues higher than those that have regard to self. It is conserved and constituted by self-sacrifice and self-transcendence. Strike deep enough into the structure or reality, and you come upon the necessity and constant functioning of Atonement. This idea which is so central in Christianity holds the same place in a philosophical view of the meaning of a spiritual membership in a moral order.

It belongs to the very idea of a moral order that the whole is good. The moral values must be not only regulative, but also dominant throughout. Any other idea would imply a division within reality: it would mean a final dualism and would contradict the idea of a universe.

But how is the perfection of the whole to be made good while yet within it are many finite members far from perfect? The principle of Atonement, and

that alone, helps us here. *The values are conserved* and the perfection of the whole realised, not because units can escape from a mass of perdition, but *because Atonement does not fail to achieve its ends,* and to overcome evil by good. Nay, more, it makes the very actuality of moral evil the opportunity and occasion for a higher good than would have been possible were it not for that actuality. It causes to be dominant throughout, not those "miserable aims which end in self," but those virtues which regard others, which live in the Spirit of the whole, which transcend the legalistic, claim and counter-claim, order.

Every sin, every defect of service to the whole, is, in principle and in tendency, an order-destroying influence; but it is overcome, not because each stands alone in moral success and failure, but because love fails not and wins in the end. Only through the conquest of evil in time is the eternal perfection of the whole won. It is the eternal and perfect order of holy love simply because it is the order wherein in time, by means of Atonement, the very highest values are made both possible and victorious. Nor are we in our finite experience altogether excluded from an intuition, an illustration, a reduced image, of that perfection of the totality of Being. Within defined ranges of time we constantly gather up into one simultaneous insight the meaning and very being of many moments

and events. In our grasp of the unity of a work of art, in our sudden reading of the unity of a personal character, in that passing into one perception of many notes which is given in all appreciation of harmony—in all these common experiences we possess a reduced image of the perfection of a universe which is *perfect, not in spite of, but because of* the sundering stream of life. The absolute insight into the perfection of the universe is the ideal limit and consummate example of an insight which, for short ranges, is our frequent experience.

The Spirit longs, suffers, with us, in our temporal strivings, just because that peace which He possesses is all compact of a good which is the best simply because it means both the ingathering and the consoling and the victory over finite evils. There could be, apart from evils overcome in the temporal order, a mechanical operation of natural laws without the soul. But *there could be no moral cosmos*—above all, there could be *no overcoming charity*—in eternity apart from "the maddening maze of things." It is the fundamental structure of reality with which we are dealing, and for a philosophical view of the conditions of the existence of a moral order the principle of Atonement is a necessary concept. By unfolding the implications of a moral order, constituted by finite selves in the process of soul formation, free and having place in a spiritual membership, we have disclosed the neces-

sary place not only of those values which are, in the restricted use of the word, moral : we have disclosed the place of those values which are more definitely religious, the values of self-sacrifice and of self-donation to the Spirit.

God, the Spirit of the whole, is the ground and origin of all efforts of finite spirits towards the conservation of the spiritual order. The more real the action, the more unsullied the self-dedication, the more God is there in action and in mind. In all who work towards the conserving redeeming end God is, according to the measure of their purity of motive, both present and embodied. This is the general ground of the fact of Incarnation.

The mind and prompting of the Spirit active in the constant working of atoning influences moves towards complete self-expression in a universally effectual and significant instance. The whole meaning of creation, in its dual form of production and redemption, converges towards its manifestation in an atoning deed which is seen as God's work. It is not in widely diffused activities, difficult for the most industrious to collect, that God reveals His effectual work. He manifests His mind in a way suitable for a gospel, in the crucial and impressive deed of the Cross. Without that significant act the whole movement seems truncated, an arch without its keystone.

God is expressed by all holy souls, according to

their degree of virtue. But He is not completely embodied and altogether present, He is not personally and totally incarnated till, by generation of the Spirit, there was brought into the world one sinless Person supremely devoted to His saving mission in its universal mode. No complete solution of the problems of the action and revelation of God is possible at any level lower than that of the unique Incarnation.

We have seen how the work of men in the counteracting of moral evil goes forward in response to the Spirit and with His co-operating action. That human work reaches its expression in that of the Man Christ Jesus. But it is not man's work alone which we see in Christ. We see His work as God. He manifests His deity by doing the work of forgiveness, which God alone can effect. It is not human virtue exalted to its highest power which we need to see, but the effectual action and revelation of God. When the full significance of sin as offence against God is realised, the fact is appreciated that only God Himself can speak the effectual word of forgiveness.

There is an identity in spirit, despite all the infinite difference in range of meaning and effect, between the human work in conservation of the moral order and the "one sufficient sacrifice and oblation." There are connecting principles—the world's great literature often illustrates them : there

are agencies at work in humanity, in the light of which the spiritual principle of Atonement can be understood as well as the need for the supremely effectual instance. Jesus Himself illustrates His mission by great principles operating in the world and maintaining the spiritual order. He finds an example of the place of His own sacrifice in the spiritual world in the spiritual meaning of the natural law: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

"The Church is a living body, and the Atonement and Incarnation are living facts still in operation. They are part of the eternal counsels of God: and whether they are enacted in the Abyss of the Divine Nature, or once for all in their fulness on the stage of history, or in miniature, as it were, in your soul and mine, the process is the same."*

The problem of Atonement is the problem of effectually vindicating in the actual world, which is the sphere of our training and task, the values which express the character of God. It is possible to state the features of the problem, but it is only out of history that the influence can come which actually does the work. The doctrine of the work of Christ rests upon this base, and from the work we grasp the Person of Christ.

In all the Spirit-prompted work of Atonement we see the genuine activity of God. Two aspects of an

* W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 332.

indivisible unity are brought together in the doctrine of the Word whose goings forth are from everlasting and who "in the fulness of the time" was made flesh. Creation gains its real goal in the work of soul-formation by the agency of Atonement, and we see the true meaning and centrality of the Cross when we see it as the consummate instance of an activity coeval with the existence of the human race.

In the Atonement wrought by Christ we see all the distinguishing marks of self-sacrificial work raised to their highest power. Here, in particular, is nothing that can be explained by the "claim and counter-claim" view of morality. Legal metaphors may, within limits, illustrate some aspects of Atonement just as metaphors drawn from physical nature may. But, in relation to an entirely spiritual and personal work, any illustrations which are not "personal," and have to do with personal relations, are in the last issue inadequate and even misleading. The satisfaction of God in the work of Christ is the satisfaction of His holy passion to redeem. The work itself is an actual work of salvation, effecting moral and spiritual recovery, not a preliminary fulfilment of legal conditions of allowing such results.

From the absolute standpoint the work of Christ is a finished work. It is a finished work because all its results, all its perfect moral and spiritual overcoming of evil, its entire adequacy in securing the

sway of the highest values throughout the universe, are implicitly, but with perfect competence, present in the one Act of Redemption.

It is not in the category of saint or hero that we can place the One who performs a universal function in the life of the spirit. The significance of the work of Christ is not even completely exhausted by affirming that He possesses the religious value of God. A great and important truth is stated when the religious value of Christ is thus affirmed, but full exposition of all that the affirmation contains is not given until it is added that this valuation is descriptive of reality, and that the person so valued is, in the scale of Being, one with the Highest. The positive importance of the value-judgment in religion and in its reference to the Person of Christ is obscured to those who fail to see that in nothing do we more completely and accurately describe ultimate reality, the reality of Spirit, than in terms of value. Value is not something of mere subjective meaning; it is descriptive of reality. It, and it alone, enables us to describe final truth. We shall return to this again, but, when once we see that Christ is the highest in the most important realm we know, it is plain that we have made a value-judgment descriptive of reality regarding Him and metaphysically true. This value-judgment must be both a judgment of worth and a judgment of final truth, or it is neither.

Not as a body of theories does Christianity take its rise, but as experienced liberation and grace. The actual presentation of the image of Christ, His sense of vocation, His awareness of a redemptive mission, His concentration upon His own unique place in the establishment of the Kingdom of God—all the common features of His unsurpassed greatness which are mirrored in the Gospels, are in keeping with, and required to account for, the place He holds in the Apostolic experience and in the life of the Church. That actual experience drives the Church to her doctrines of the work and Person of Christ. We see the formulation of doctrine in the primitive literature and in the early Church. The absolute place of Christ in the religious life cannot be left unexplained. The fact of His unique work leads on to the question regarding Himself, "Who is this who alone can discharge the functions of the Redeemer of the world?" When we are dealing with the material of an absolute solution of the religious problem of the race, we are dealing with the most important elements in a metaphysical enquiry. The function of Christ is rightly decisive in the philosophy of religion and for theology, because thereby are brought to us the most important features in the subject matter of religious philosophy. The metaphysical element in the philosophy of religion in general, and in Christology in particular, is not something with which we

can dispense at will: it grows out of—rather, it is involved in—appreciation of the place of Christ in the solution of our personality's supreme problem.

The actual Christology which has gained expression in the historic Creeds is at root verifiable, because it is verified whenever the function of Christ in the life of the spirit is stated at its full value. Doubtless there are in the modes of expression of that doctrine features and phraseology which show a subjective dependence upon philosophical concepts which may not be exactly those of the present day. But in its central emphasis upon the place of Christ in redemption and for our knowledge of God it is of permanent significance. The New Testament writers and the framers of the Creeds were in their formulation of doctrine actuated by motives derived from an experience of the function of Christ which in all ages, and still to-day, is identical and potent.

Those who placed on record the evangelical memories, and those who voiced the Apostolic experience, and those who framed the Catholic Creeds, were occupied with the same problem, and sharers in that precise and uniform experience of which we are sharers. The objective validity of the doctrine of the Person of Christ inheres in the character of the Christian experience. Our intention in the statement of doctrine must, if we at all grasp the issues, be identical with the intention of

the writers of Gospels, witnesses to the initial experience, framers of the doctrine. Their voices may sound strange down the years of change, but we possess the key to their interests and the source of their thought.

The limits of restatement in Christology are provided by the Christian subject matter. The new must be the old set in the wider modern context and expressed in the modern terminology. *But it must be so set and expressed with aims identical with those possessed of the source of all Christology*—the experience of the place of Christ in and for the life of the soul. It is to be hoped also that it may be restated with an equally clear grasp of the actual data of Christian knowledge. He still hides Himself from those who would "take Him by force to make Him a king." Nor does He come before us to gratify our curiosity and to provide another element of interest in a jaded age. He comes as Lord of the conscience, subduing the heart and giving strength to the will.

The significance of Christ for the solution of the universal problem of religion, for the life of the spirit, reaches down to the last reality. He finds us and restores us where we most clearly know reality to be. THAT WHICH IS ABSOLUTE FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THAT WHICH IS MOST CERTAINLY KNOWN.

We experience the divine power of Christ when upon us He performs that divine work which created

and maintains the Christian Church. Thus He authenticates the representation of Himself given, in broad outline and with selective freedom, in the New Testament, and proves His absolute place in the solution of the problem of religion.

Within the soul He demonstrates His deity by working the works of God. He is mirrored in the New Testament and authenticated by the constant testimony of the Church. But there is something which creates both the New Testament witness and its constant verification in Spirit in the Church of Christ. *Behind all the recorded impressions is the One who created them: and creative of the present verification is the same Person in the power of His work*—an historic work of continuous action, efficacy, and meaning. He still bears witness unto Himself. *A real authority must be personal, and, as such, must act directly upon us* without mediation, with the authentication afforded by His presence in action.

V.—VALUE AND REALITY: THEIR RELATIONS IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Fact and theory—"The structure of the universe"—Values describe reality—Equation between origin and validity: origin and value meet in the distinctive Christian affirmations: the Christian "world-view" brings out the ultimate meaning of those affirmations; it is related to general theistic theory as more of the same kind.

In this closing chapter we shall pass from criticism and from defensive statement to exposition of the positive contents of Christian thought on the basis gained. The apologetic interest will not disappear, but it will be subordinate to the interests of systematic thought. What is the significance for truth and reality of our estimate of Christianity by the criterion of value? What is the view of God and of the human soul which can be reasonably held in Christian light?

The discussion of our topic would be incomplete without some answer to these questions, though considerations of space compel us to limit enquiry to their most general and important aspects.

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It is, of course, as a practical question calling for the decision of practical people in a practical age that the question, Can we dispense with Chris-

tianity? in the main arises. It may be said that in this discussion, with its broad insistence upon the place of theory in the elucidation of the issues and in the constructive answer, the practical nature of the matter has been somewhat obscured. That, however, can hardly be said with fairness, since it has been shown how all our most practical questions rest upon great backgrounds in the nature of the world, and in the structure and needs of the self. All our practical attitudes of mind involve theory, and rest upon some implicit view of the meaning of experience.

Nor could any issue be more intensely practical than that which is connected with the means of our gaining our individual and world-wide stability and worth. In all our questions of private and public interest the neglected factor—some failure to regard one or more of the determinate conditions of a successful result—will thwart any enterprise. It is no less the case when the issues involved have to do with the failure or success of a whole personality, and with the harmony and peace of a total race.

If my argument has gained clear expression, it is with the practical question of the strength of mind of individuals, with the mental and moral health of society, that we have been concerned. The Christian religion rests upon that effective provision for our moral and mental health which is the gift of Christ. It is indeed the practical nature of this

matter of the health of mind of individual souls and of humanity that invests Christianity with its genuine indispensableness. It is but an extension of the same primacy of the practical in the question and in its solution to affirm the dependence of our practice upon a reasoned judgment as to its grounds.

Regarding the effectiveness of Christian religious faith for the production of health of mind, and consequently to some extent of body also, we may recall Captain J. A. Hadfield's conclusions gained as a result of extensive experience in nervous and emotional complaints: "Speaking as a student of psychotherapy, who, as such, has no concern with theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences that we possess for producing that harmony and peace of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients. In some cases I have attempted to cure nervous patients with suggestions of quietness and confidence, but without success until I have linked these suggestions on to that faith in the power of God which is the substance of the Christian's confidence and hope."* The same writer also quotes in support of his view weighty opinions from leading specialists in mental diseases and in Psychology, of which the following from Jung (*Analytical Psychology*) is typical: "I have

* Streeter, *The Spirit: God and His Relation to Man*, p. 114.

come to the conclusion that these religious and philosophical motive forces—the so-called metaphysical needs of the human being—must receive positive consideration at the hands of the analyst. . . . He must make them serve biological ends as psychologically valuable factors. Thus these instincts assume once more those functions that have been theirs from time immemorial."

Now, it is plain that the nervous patient, in order to be beneficially influenced, must believe that the hopes and convictions that strengthen him are well grounded in reason. As soon as the cold contagion of doubt spreads over his mind the restoring influence will abate also.

Nor is this consideration of the importance of belief restricted to the case of those who are unduly depressed and in a pathological mental condition. That condition itself has been induced by the failure of the self to maintain a healthy attitude of mind. The nervous patient is only an extreme instance of the results of failure in what is the task and source of competence in all normal persons.

Detract from the reasoned confidence with which you hold your strengthening convictions, and you detract from the firmness and self-controlling function of your life-attitude. It is bound to be so, for it is but one example of a universal truth. Your very confidence along with its valuable practical results is made of no effect unless you continue to be

convinced that it is true and founded upon knowledge of the structure of life and reality.

The truth just stated of the necessity for an equation between value and theory of origin is not only itself of great practical importance. It is the final demonstration of the absolute necessity of metaphysical and positive theory. We cannot retain the beliefs that are necessary for moral, mental, and bodily health as mere spiritual poses. We cannot retain the indispensable practical value of Christianity for the moral, mental, and physical life of the soul unless we hold it to be true as a statement of the character of reality by means of its revelation of God and of our relation to Him.

All that we are bound to estimate most highly in respect of beauty, goodness, knowledge, spiritual and physical health, requires God for its support and for its explanation. "They search for God, as men search for evidence about ghosts or witches. Show us, they say, the marks of His presence. Tell us what problems His existence would solve. And when these tasks have been happily accomplished, then will we willingly place Him among those hypothetical causes by which science endeavours to explain the only world we directly know, the familar world of daily experience."

"But God must not thus be treated as an entity, which we may add to, or subtract from, the sum of things scientifically known, as the canons of induc-

tion may suggest. He is Himself the condition of scientific knowledge. If He be excluded from the causal series which produces beliefs, the cognitive series which justifies them is corrupted at the root. And as it is only in a theistic setting that beauty can retain its deepest meaning, and love its brightest lustre, so these great truths of æsthetics and ethics are but half-truths isolated and imperfect, unless we add to them yet a third. We must hold that reason and the works of reason have their source in God: that from Him they draw their inspiration; and that if they repudiate their origin, by this very act they proclaim their own insufficiency."*

The relation between a just estimate of value and an adequate view of origin is of the greatest importance, and bears profoundly upon our view of the importance of reasonable theory, of firmly established concepts, for the practical life. Such a consideration at once shows the importance, for the preservation of those Christian ideas which writers like Eucken wish to see preserved, of the firm grasp of the fact-basis of Christianity. The fact is that, for the preservation of a religion which a merely pragmatic survey of the contemporary situation of humanity shows to be indispensable, both fact-basis and theoretic unfolding are necessary. This means that nothing is more practical in Christianity, as in everything else, than that we

* A. J. Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, p. 273.

should concern ourselves with the question of its *truth and meaning*.

We have an ethical and religious interest in the great affirmations of Christology and of the doctrine of God as unfolded in the light of Christ. Humanity has a great practical and ethical interest in the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. And yet, apart from the Incarnation and the Cross, these ideas have no form and content, and no assignable verification and source. In these relations at least certain metaphysical concepts are of the utmost moral and religious value.

Religion has no more important interest than the interest in the affirmation of the omnipotence of God. An omnipotent God is a necessary postulate, not only for the stability of a universe, but for the peace and security of the individual soul. And yet, in view of the hard facts of sin and evil, it is not exact to say that the omnipotence of God is a self-evident truth. It may even not be able to establish itself as a truth until we learn it from God Himself as He discloses the heart of reality by revealing Himself.

Now, in the work of Christ we see the divine omnipotence at work. We see it in action and we learn its character. We see that the holiness and love of God are the master-forces in the universe. And having seen that, the truth becomes decisive for our view of God. We have discovered the

Lordship of Christ Jesus. We unfold the full meaning of the discovery when we see God in Him, and give Him His place within the sphere of Deity. When we assert that by the Word of God all things were made, we mean, in Christian light, that no principle ultimately sustains and is really efficacious in the universe except the Spirit that is revealed by Christ. With such knowledge there is indeed given the key to life and death, to things present and things to come.

"He who is the slave of Christ is master of every fate"—it is much to see just that. It is even more to see that nothing in the field of our warfare nor in the Great Beyond holds any final power out of harmony with the mind and spirit of Jesus. We shall thank God for our creation and all the blessings of this life, and seek to reconquer outward things in the interest of the Kingdom and in the light of the truth which is but one. Still, when all is said, if we have taken the measure of the soul and reckoned the worth thereof, and thought upon its range and destiny, we shall see our calling, our centre, and our home.

> "Not with the swallow building here a house,
> But looking for her glory and her zest,
> Beyond the fading splendour of the West,
> Past Earth's fair gourds, past her almond boughs,
> Past utmost bound of the everlasting hills."

The dependence of some of the greatest of human

aspirations upon the warrant which is afforded by the testimony of the religious consciousness and by the witness of the great religious teachers is definitely indicated with reference to "the hope of immortality." It is comparatively easy, and therefore a trap for the unwary, to fall into the mistake of failing to recognise the historical sources of some of the most precious heritages of thought. It often happens that we enter into full possession of ideals and motives which at one time were by no means the secure heritage of the race, and therefore treat as necessary "thoughts of faith" what really are thoughts introduced by great religious founders. Not without warning against something which indicates both shortsightedness and ingratitude, we may recall Tennyson's lines:

> "Read my little story,
> He who runs may read,
> Most can raise the flower now,
> For all have got the seed."

I instance the doctrine of immortality in its dependence upon the testimony of the specifically religious consciousness, not because it does not receive a measure of support from the scientific and ethical realms of thought, but because it is a good general illustration of the reliance of most of our greatest human interests and concerns upon religion. "To reject the religious conception of personality is, in the long run, to fall back on the belief

that human life is only a transient episode in the vast cosmic process."*

At the close of the most thoughtful survey of the Idea of Immortality in the light of science, ethics, and philosophy given in the book from which I have just quoted, Dr. Galloway emphasises the source of the assurance of eternal life upon "the thought which is at the centre of Christianity," and adds: "Speculative reflexion may do something to justify this conception, but for the Christian it is primarily a conviction won from religious experience. *The idea of a God who imparts Himself to His finite creatures, and in love redeems them, has been born of historic Christianity.*" That is the thought which I have again and again sought to express in this book. That it is true, as a matter of historic fact, does not admit of reasonable doubt. That it requires for its permanent availability for the life of the spirit the world-view which is distinctively Christian is merely another instance of the equation between "origin" and "validity."

If we get to grips with all our vital contemporary questions, individual, social, international, connected with the hope of limitation of armaments and with the prospect of gaining a worthy type of existence, we shall, at the foundation of them all, come upon great demands for moral resolution and decision in harmony with the determinate condi-

* George Galloway, *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 221.

tions of genuine outward and inward well-being. Nor shall we entertain the expectation that the pathway of humanity may lead to better results than those which we now deplore unless men also go along the pathway of reality of "that which *is*, the truth behind the dream." And if we follow such a clue it will be quite unnecessary to elaborate arguments in defence of the call to face those moral and spiritual realities which we confront when we consider the indispensableness of Christianity.

There is one characteristic of the criterion of value in religion which must be kept steadily in mind. The affirmation that religions must be graded according to their inherent capacity to confer aid upon the soul in its characteristic task does not mean that the question is merely one for practical ethics or for an empirical psychology. The actual values, disclosed in the real clash of values which is involved in the effort of the soul to maintain and enhance its own individual selfhood, are themselves descriptive of the fundamental nature of reality. It will be worth while to get this point well established and fixed in the mind. When we regard the absolute standards and over-individual "worths," we are regarding the great principles which bear up the structure of the universe, or, in more correct and more theological terms, disclose the mind of absolute Spirit. They are the foundations of the universe.

The existence of such foundations, of the realities

which give them form and strength and make them what they are, of the determinate structure of the universe, is implied in all our knowledge. We are constantly brought up against them. "There are limits: in spite of my ignorance of Science there are *certain* things I seem to achieve successfully: in spite of the laws of health, I can go to *certain* lengths in offending against them. And in general, as regards all that is effective, in the widest sense, *certain* things are indispensable for their success, *certain* things inevitably preclude success."*

Nor are the definite lines of the determinate structure restricted to the material realm: the structure discloses itself in the realms of the moral and spiritual. Sir Henry Jones, speaking of "The Working Faith of a Social Reformer,"† sets forth the consideration that certain uniformities of social order are inevitable postulates for a working theory of life: "In a society where there were no permanencies there would be no expectations: no pact or promise could be either broken or kept: for where everything is unstable or incalculable no pact or promise could be made. The housewife, though all unconscious, assumes the uniformity of nature when she places the kettle over the fire, and postulates the stable order of society in ordering goods from her grocer."

* Stanley A. Cook, art. "Comparative Religion and After," *Expository Times*, vol. xxx., No. 3, p. 124.

† *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1905, p. 50.

It is but an extension of the significance of the uniformity of nature, and of the conditions of social effectiveness, to see, in the existing unsettlement of thought and activity, indications of failure to conform to the final realities. I venture to quote the concluding words of Mr. Cook's article, because they so admirably present the point of view which I am at this point seeking to make clear: "If the Great War may be regarded as the conflict between truer and falser conceptions of the nature of the Universe, we shall only be deceiving ourselves, if we think there are not other false conceptions. All our efforts to spread our 'culture,' to reform peoples, or in any way to further the progress of humanity, imply at bottom certain theories of the Universe and of the Ultimate Realities: hence it would seem only self-evident that a consciously held view on these vital questions must be a precondition of their success."

Though there are always with us those who affect to despise thought, and especially *systematic* thought, it cannot be said that recent history lends any support to their attitude of mind. Such people generally fall back upon an uncriticised reliance upon what they term "life," although it probably never occurs to them that their tendency rests upon a very definite, though implicit, theory. Putting their theory to the practical test, which they affect so much to respect, the patent and obvious deeper

sources of the recent Great War sufficiently demonstrate the immense influence of thought and theory upon the character and deeds not only of individuals but of entire nations.

After this tremendous manifestation on the stage of history of the power of doctrine and theory, it is time that the false separation between life and thought had a rest. For influence over others the man who has a clear-cut set of convictions will always take the palm, both in everyday affairs and in all the wider concerns of life. Before the War contempt for systematic thinking was an innocent but pathetic illusion: to-day it is evidence of invincible but blameworthy ignorance. Our reassuring conviction as to the futility of "mere" thought and our brave contempt of the professorial mind have been broken against the rock of history. "The pragmatist has seen the impossible happen. He has seen abstract theories do concrete damage, and 'pure' thought blast the foundations of a world."*

The practical inference from this historical lesson is that *there are conditions of right thinking and right conduct;* that militarism failed because it was not in harmony with human nature and with the real aspirations of men. And the lesson has a very wide application. We see its reference to the doctrine of "blood and iron." But there are other

* E. Herman, *Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, p. ix.

doctrines. Of these also the ultimate question is—Are they in accord with human nature, are they in harmony with the real "nature of things"?

I saw a few days ago this as the heading of a popular article in a popular newspaper—"Thinking in Terms of an Impossible World." I need not stop to justify or to condemn the matter of the article. The title is sufficient. We must all think in terms of "a possible world"—the man who relies upon "life" no less than the man who relies upon "thought." That is to say, our everyday life and our popular arguments rest upon the underlying conviction that there is a determinate whole of things, and that unless both our thought and our life harmonise therewith, both will do harm or "come to naught." The man in the street tacitly confesses this: the philosopher needs no more for his whole theory of being. It seems strange that they should so soon and so easily be brought together; but then, both are merely concerned in the last issue with what is "obvious," both are "up against" reality, both need to think correctly—*that implies a standard.* You must think things as they are—in other words, there *is* what *is real,* and you can know it. Apart from this fact, nothing could be either proved or disproved.

In a very interesting paragraph in his introduction to Dr. Tudor Jones's valuable book, *The Spiritual Ascent of Man,* the Master of Balliol

says: "The ordinary Englishman is not a philosopher. With him, as with Dr. Johnson's friend, 'cheerfulness will keep breaking in.' But most Englishmen do more thinking than they acknowledge, and nearly all Englishmen are fond of an argument, and those arguments generally turn upon really deep and philosophical notions. It is, of course, to be hoped that even the philosopher can remain cheerful, and it is worth mentioning that English names bulk largely on the roll of the very greatest thinkers. There is, in any case, force in the further observation that this cheerfulness itself rests on an inarticulate philosophy, and that 'there is danger in our English foible of being too proud to be articulate.'"

Now, while it may be too much to expect that all sound philosophy could be as simple and clear as the railway time-table, still we ought to acquit philosophers of any intention of obscuring plain issues or of seeking to fog the mind. After all, they are only trying to do their best at what is every man's task. They are seeking to accomplish thoroughly what we are all trying to do from the cradle to the grave: to explain experience. They, at least, do not cease to put forward the questions of the child, the instinctive philosopher, and to ask, "Why?" That is the claim which the philosophers make for themselves—at least, we find that Dr. Bosanquet makes that claim for them.

"We are only attempting, in the form of reflection, what every living creature at least is doing, one way or another, between birth and death." It is refreshing to note also that the same representative thinker counts among over-hasty ideas "the false denial that great philosophy offers the quintessence of life," and claims that the "material of philosophy is that which is in a sense *obvious*, though, like all obvious things, difficult to make clear," and that "a sane and central theory is not full of oddities and caprices, but is a rendering in coherent thought of what lies at the heart of actual life and love."

It is, of course, gratifying to have these assurances, and to note further that they expect that their systematic thinking will provide us with "both hope and guidance": for if they can do this for us, they are friends of mankind indeed, especially in these days of our need. Nor is Dr. Bosanquet alone in thus associating philosophy with life as a means of understanding, and therefore of guiding, life. Dr. Josiah Royce, in his remarkable lectures on *The World and the Individual*, affirms that very many people are guilty of philosophising who might seek to deny the soft impeachment: "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together indulging in gossip about the doings of their neighbours, their speech, even if it involves out-and-out scandal, is devoted to a more or less critical discussion, to an illustration and even

to a sort of analysis, of what are really very deep ethical problems—problems about what people ought to do, and about the intricate relations between law and passion in human life. Well, as even the most frivolous or scandalous gossip really manifests an intense, if rude, concern for the primal questions of moral philosophy, so our children and all our most simple and devout souls constantly discourse of being and face the central issues of reality, but know it not. Yet once face the true connection of abstract theory and daily life, and then one easily sees that life means theory, and that you deal constantly and decisively with the Theory of Being whenever you utter a serious word."*

Among the obvious and important considerations which may be regarded as axiomatic is this : though one may perhaps *exist,* even in modern conditions, without thought, no one can truly be said to *live,* with all that full life involves in this age, without thought—thought that involves constantly "obstinate questionings of sense and outward things." This consideration is emphasised by the success of those schools of memory training which are so much to the fore. They show the value of its application to life and in affairs of psychological principle, and also of certain fundamental ideas which depend upon philosophy for their justification. To fall back upon an uncritical reliance

* Royce, *The World and the Individual,* vol. i., p. 14.

upon life and what is called practical would be to negate and stultify the evident gains of the application of thought to affairs.

And these demonstrations of the practical value of psychology as applied to business are only indications of what is of very wide reference. I can imagine the man who has never realised the practical value of psychological study for his success in life might affect to despise the aid which psychology alone could give him. So I can also well imagine that the seeker after truth and reality, dismayed by the arduousness of the path, might make the great refusal and fall back upon Pragmatism—just as the primitive savage dweller in remote islands might hear of the true God and fall back upon his totems.

But just as I should deny that the man who affected to despise training, and the competence in affairs which an elementary knowledge of psychology affords, can make good his claim to fall back upon common sense, so equally I should deny that Pragmatism, in its glorification of the "will to believe" and in its repudiation of what it is pleased to call "intellectualism," can make good its claim to fall back upon "life" and "the practical." The only thing it could fall back upon at all would be life deprived of its chief manifestation—a life which had repudiated its crown and guide. But if, as we may well affirm, the real meaning and value of Pragmatism, as developed by William James, re-

sides in its reassertion in these days of the importance of the exercise of will and the dependence of the pursuit of truth and the discovery of it, upon the desire for it, then the Pragmatists have been merely knocking at an open door. No thinker of any importance has ever denied the seriousness and difficulty of the pathway to reality nor the place of will in the search for the right way. Whether we are dealing with the Pragmatist who is the simple-minded adherent of common sense or the more self-conscious Pragmatist who destroys his Pragmatism by assigning intrinsic value to his practical theories, both will at last find that "things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be," and, whatever else they may discover, will sooner or later find that they are face to face with the ancient question which no man may with impunity either despise or neglect—"What is reality?"

The question that we have to ask concerning any course of action which works well is—Why does it work well? The only answer to such a question must be—It is successful because it is in harmony with the nature of things. Even if its scope be strictly limited, the opinion which counsels successful action must be right within those limits. In this thoroughly conditioned world there are limits of successful action, conditions of effectiveness both of life and thought. These will be successful in so far as they correspond with the conditions of

objective truth and reality, with the fundamental structure of the universe.

If I am wrong in my view of the fundamental structure of reality, if my scale of values and my estimate of the place thereof in experience and in ultimate reality is wrong, then I am wrong both in theory and regarding counsels for practice. It is to a study of truth and reality that we are called in the interests both of life and of thought, and in the degree in which I am successful or unsuccessful in depicting the features of truth and reality, I am either practical and right or non-practical and wrong.

That there are conditions precedent of successful life and thought is a practical truth with important consequences. It implies that there is an absolute whole of truth, a universe of definite and determinate structure. Erroneous life and thought among individuals and communities issues in confusion and disaster. The War has been a standing proof of this. There is no need to labour the point.

We speak of the "game of life," and sometimes when we so speak we do not intend to speak lightly. The description itself, obvious as it is in its appropriateness and in its limitations, bears out our conviction of the determinate structure of life. Even if you only play golf or cricket, or any other game worth playing, it is a good game because it has precise and clearly defined rules. The whole spirit or logic of the game enters into every stroke or phase

of it. The whole determinate structure of the universe stands in relation to our simplest action or thought. Your "hit" or "miss," be it in cricket or in the game of life, is an irrevocable deed. It affects your whole score or your whole destiny. It is an example in common experience of the absolute definiteness of reality.

And this absolute definiteness—the difference between the correctly judged stroke, the difference between right and wrong in life—extends not only to actions, but also to the thought, the judgment, which prompts actions. The opinion which led to the course of action, the counsel which prompted the stroke, the thought which issued in the irrevocable deed, the judgment and advice—these things are as right or wrong, as much in harmony with reality or out of it, as much a "hit" or a "miss," in your jest as in your earnest. "If you want to know what absolute truth is, and what is absolute falsity, do anything whatever and then try to undo your deed. Every effort to undo your deed is a blunder. Every opinion that you can undo it is a trivial and absolutely false absurdity. Just such triviality and absurdity belong to the thesis that absolute truth is an unpractical and inaccessible abstraction."*

* Royce, *The Sources of Religious Insight*, p. 158. I am indebted to Royce for the leading features in the argument of this passage.

The task before this day and generation, in its life and for its thought, is the thoroughgoing application of the principle of value, of degrees of value and importance, to all the material of our knowledge. This is the great constructive task which will mean the rejuvenescence of religion and of idealism in conduct and in theory. As Urban says in his book, *Valuation: the Theory of Value:* "Fundamental changes in the actual values of mankind have brought with them what may, without exaggeration, be described as a gradual shifting of the philosophical centre of gravity. The problem of knowledge has itself become, in some quarters wholly, the problem of values."

This problem of values, though most distinctly a problem for thought, rises in chief as a life-problem. In an intense and in a wide range it rose before humanity during the recent period of conflict and distress of nations. With the loss of those near and dear to us on terrible battlefields, many things which seemed of value took on a different aspect or appeared in a totally changed light. The frustrated hopes for those who gave their lives in pursuit of an ideal aim gave to many a new sense of proportion, and set in strong and challenging context all our estimates of worth.

Before the War the evident failure of a civilisation based upon materialistic standards and interests, its failure to produce content and worth and

stability, had produced a growing unrest and disappointment—signs of the practical insecurity of life resting upon such a base. The type of civilisation and the main directions of popular thought were based upon the values, (themselves resting upon the invalid but all-confident assumptions of "science" given a materialistic bent) of wealth, power, and material interests and satisfactions. Probably it was widely believed that the theoretic outlook was impregnable, and therefore that the practical outlook was enforced. In point of fact, they both arose out of the same life-process—a preference for the lower obvious—for the nearest and least difficult values. In "science," so called, the preference for the "lower obvious" led to the materialistic hypothesis: in practical life the same unworthy and unscientific prejudice led to a material standard of worth and of goods. That influence still operates, though its claim to be either scientific or human has been disproved both by recent investigation in science and by wider thought. How to combat that influence in the light of modern knowledge and for the interests of humanity is the main duty of all correct thinkers to-day.

Dr. Bosanquet has in his Gifford Lectures, *The Principle of Individuality and Value* and *The Value and Destiny of the Individual,* so emphasised the importance of wholeness, or "totality," that that particular principle may be regarded as his own

special contribution to thought. "Thought has always," so writes Dr. Bosanquet, "the nature of a system of connected members, and is an effort to take that form which we may call a world. It is logic, the spirit of totality, which, being the principle of individuality, is the key to reality, value, and freedom. Things can only be valued rightly when valued in the complete being to which they belong." The judgment of value implies a standard, and in an interesting way Dr. Bosanquet shows its bearing in æsthetic: "Having feeling, we can both test and mould it by critical reasoning. Good literary criticism shows how this can be done. In truth the education of feeling is the most important of all education—teaching people to like and dislike rightly—as the Greeks knew; and this means that there is a standard. . . . The conclusion is that the judgment of value can be logically supported because the objects of our likings and dislikings possess as much of satisfactoriness, which is the same thing with value, as they possess of reality and trueness."* The insight expressed in this application of the criterion of satisfactoriness is at once evident, and one could wish that Dr. Bosanquet had done justice to it in some of his ultimate conclusions. The same must be said about his excellent statement of the criterion of a valid synthesis: "Logical com-

* See also *Principle*, p. 62 *f.* Bosanquet's quotation from Whistler.

pleteness, or universality, is not a deadening but a vitalising quality, and thought is not a principle of reproducing reality with omissions, but of organising worlds and investing their detail with fresh significance."*

A common fallacy in the presentation of ideas of Reality is the inversion of the method of interpretation of the lower in the light of the higher categories. This has been well termed (by Dr. Pringle-Pattison) "interpretation by reduction." We have an outstanding example of this fallacy in Materialism. The lowest common measure of all things is taken as the absolute ground and reality of them all. The spiritual is brought down to the level of the biological, and then the biological is brought down to the chemical, and that finally to the mechanical. Materialism is founded upon this fallacy—the false foundation of a preference of the lower obvious : in life it shows itself in a preference for visible material goods over those of the spiritual realm : in thought it deifies the atom, investing it with "the promise and potency of all things." The objection to the whole scheme, whether in life or in thought, is that *there is not enough* in the proposed solutions to provide an answer.

Nature discloses, and at the present time especially forces upon our attention, a range of qualitative

* *Principle*, p. 298.

differences.* The human ranges of being disclose still further qualitative differences, mental and moral. The really obvious conclusion from the broad facts of mind and matter is that we do not understand the evolutionary process at all from its obscure beginnings, but in the light of the values which it develops progressively, and, most of all, in the light of its end. We understand it in the light of the human individual and race, and most of all in the light of those spiritual values which the race bears, and which the struggle for existence enhances and makes firm.

Yet another aspect of the neglect of the spirit of totality is the substitution of the significance of the part for that of the whole. Much of this error arises from mere inadvertence. Quite often it comes from defective attention. It is, however, specially fostered by restricted interests, by over-specialisation, by an education or training which is narrow in scope. We have on record on the page of history frequent confessions made by masters of special departments of knowledge of the restriction of feeling and interest created by the concentration of mind upon restricted fields. It is part of the price which has to be paid for certain results which on the whole could not be obtained without payment

* See especially J. A. Thomson, *System of Animate Nature*, vol. i., p. 164 *ff.*, and vol. ii., p. 552 *ff.* ; and Pringle-Pattison *The Idea of God*, p. 209 *f.*

of that price. Still, it is useless and inexact not to recognise the defects of over-specialisation, and especially the disqualification which it creates for wide views and for comprehensiveness of knowledge and opinion. It prevents the chemical student from doing justice to those factors in biology which chemical laws and processes cannot explain. It prevents the psychologist from doing justice to those factors in interpretation of mind and spirit which only philosophy can vindicate and solve.

Another example of the attempt to explain "by reduction" appears in the abandonment of the effort to think things through and in falling back upon some form of immediacy or "the given" or "life."

At the same time, each of the subordinate aspects of experience have their rights. We may not sacrifice, as Materialism does, the whole to the part: in this case, to the most trivial and insignificant part. Equally we may not sacrifice, as an absolutism, which is the bare form of totality, does to the neglect of comprehensiveness and non-elimination of component factors, the part to the whole.

I have drawn attention to the important place assigned to the principle of value in the best contemporary thought because its bearing upon the subject of discussion in this volume is obvious. The stress upon the idea of value is often taken to mean merely subjective preference or "worth for life." Not so does the question rise for the thought

of the present day, and not so does it rise for our final synthesis of thought.

It is by going down to the moral and religious roots of the great Christian affirmations concerning the Person of Christ and of the Being of God that we best commend the heritage of Christian theology. The great credal statements conserve great ethical and spiritual convictions which concern humanity's highest good. The fundamental place of Christ in the religious consciousness gets its complete estimation for intellect and for our view of ultimate reality by means of great Christological affirmations, and by the evolution of the idea of God in view of its most illuminating material. The ethicising of dogma—that is to say, the unfolding of its moral significance—is a chief means of demonstrating the importance and truth of the dogma itself. It is with the fundamental structure of reality that we are dealing when we formulate our view of God and the world on the grounds of the revelation brought by Christ. The theological affirmation keeps pace with the moral and religious conviction and confidence.

The moral interest, central as it is in the data at the root of the doctrine of Christ, is dominant in all the constructive presentation of the ultimate meaning of the Christian facts. The doctrine itself is governed by the motive of giving full expression to the soul's assurance that it has experienced reality in its contact with God.

Equally humanity has a great, a final, moral and religious stake and interest in the doctrine of the Trinity gained as an unfolding of the implications of the work of Christ. The value of the doctrine of the Trinity, in its full and ontological reference, is often obscured by controversies arising out of reputed difficulties in its philosophical statement for the modern mind. So long as the intention is to retain the metaphysical affirmations in their full ethical and spiritual meaning, restatement may be all to the good: but only if it conserves the values which gained expression in past days in terminology suited, it may be, for those days, but not quite our terminology. Professor A. E. Taylor, in his review of the first volume of Mr. Webb's important Gifford Lectures, *God and Personality*,* gives noteworthy expression to the vital religious interest which is at the root of the Trinitarian formulæ. I venture to quote: "You cannot really worship Bosanquet's Absolute when your eyes have been opened to its real character any more than you could worship a 'fortuitous concourse of atoms.' You can only worship what is through and through good, and only that of which personality is the *essentia* is good. This brief and blunt way of putting the point which Mr. Webb develops cautiously and elaborately is, as I say, unphilosophical in form, but in substance it seems to me absolutely sound. . . .

* *Theology*, July, 1920, p. 42.

It is this line of thought which justifies Christian theology in its conviction that the Trinity of 'persons' in the Godhead must be, as the phrase is, 'essential' and not merely 'economic.' Signs have not been wanting in modern times of the tendency to revert from the commonly accepted standards of orthodox belief to the conception of a merely 'economic' Trinity. But philosophically the reversion is a mistake. To make the Divine 'persons,' as Mr. Webb happily puts it, *personæ* merely in the sense of 'parties' to such diverse transactions as the creation, redemption, and government of the world, so that it is, after all, the same undifferentiated individual who appears alike as the Divine 'party' in all transactions, is in the end to deny that personal love and personal understanding are more at best than mere accidents of the Divine Nature."

In the above extract we have a valuable and judicial estimation of the moral worth of the Christian metaphysical tradition. It is just as well that those who, often with very little philosophical acumen, take refuge in a mixture of ideas drawn from mutually destructive currents in theological speculation should have before them the real strength and value of the historic doctrine of the Trinity. It is also allowable to point out that it is a mistake to think that Christology can live with any and every philosophical tendency and position.

The idea of the immanence of God requires for its unfolding the recognition of "degrees of immanence." The Holy Spirit more indwells in the saint and in the man of holy and humble heart than in those of less notable virtue, though "every virtue we possess" is made actual by His indwelling Presence. His indwelling in the One sinless Person is total, unique, and *sui generis*. There is on account of sinlessness and absolute dedication to a unique, divinely given, mission of redemption, the Incarnation by the Holy Ghost. These are moral distinctions and facts. They require the metaphysical assertions of the great historic Creeds to do them justice in a universe which is morally conditioned through and through.

The divine transcendence is a moral category. "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts." That inflowing of the life and love of God "whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature" is ours as the gift of the Spirit. By its means the divine intention is realised, but it is an indwelling limited and conditioned by our measure of attainment in holiness, and by the necessary subordination and dependence of "a finite individual."

The inhabitation of the soul by God and the reception by the soul of the inflowing grace, love, and life of God are not destructive of distinctions, differences, and qualifications calling for, even in the final rest and attainment of the soul, reserve,

Godly fear, and dread humility. Within the soul by His Spirit, in Himself, God, in the totality of His Being, abides as the soul's Other. The distinction and the incorporation are alike necessitated by the nature of God and by the qualities of love, the essence of Deity, the highest good of all souls.

The historical and moral grounds of the doctrine of the undivided Trinity are but the prelude to the grounds of that doctrine in the necessary* conditions of the Being of God, "having life and love in Himself." The truth of the doctrine is also implied in the conditions of any fruition of love, any attainment of beatitude, by the finite soul. The more we withdraw from any concept of personality as "an impervious unit," the more we realise that in the exercise of the highest qualities we are fused from our separateness, the more does the self affirm and find itself through its self-merging in the Whole, its genuine self-donation.

By means of the Christian conception of God we are enabled to state a view which combines all the values of Transcendence and Immanence. The soul in its partaking of, and going out towards, the love of God finds Him in Himself as possessing life and love in Himself. *The Trinity in Unity is an assertion of this fulness of being and love in the total Godhead, with which totality, with all the reality of Personality therein, the finite self has*

* Necessary, I mean, as flowing from the *character* of God.

to do. The doctrine of the Trinity is the complete assertion that the God who is thus manifested is truly manifested as He absolutely is in Himself. It discloses the living quality of the Being and life of the Godhead, and gives it that determinate form which is gained by a revelation conveyed historically. The ultimate Reality has a fulness of life and love but no indefinite complexity. Conserving all the vital interests of the idea of Immanence, it is well also to maintain the intense interest and emotional value of the personal or quasi-personal distinctions contained or unified within the Whole. God is Spirit : it is characteristic of Spirit to surpass natural life in the depth of the differences it comprises, and in the living intensity of its vital unity.

In theology the idea of the Divine Immanence is best brought in under the heading, "Gifts of the Holy Spirit." The thing that is most immanent in us is a transcendent thing in itself, something for ever about to be, an invasive activity of God, a perpetual challenge for the love and aspiration of the soul. The soul in and for its actual possession of the love of God and of its own love towards God puts away any merging of itself in, any equation of itself with, the absolute Being.

By thus relating dogma and theory to its source in actual spiritual life, we not only save the doctrine from an appearance, from which it often suffers, of being a highly speculative and abstract body of

notions—we also invest the theories themselves with greater sanction. Cut off from their base they are apt to appear remote and isolated, but related to the genuine sources of belief and to real and practically effectual solutions of spiritual problems, their truth and value becomes clearly evident. The separation between value and reality, between religion and metaphysics, which marked the theology of Albrecht Ritschl, cannot be sustained: *it is overcome within the unity of an individual consciousness* and in view of the objective significance of values. The theoretic counterpart of an absolute religious value must of itself be absolutely true. Still, it is all to the good to ground the truth of Christianity in moral and religious certainties, and in its solution of the permanent questions of the soul.

Dr. W. L. Davidson touches in an interesting way upon this topic in Lecture V. of his recent Croall Lectures. This Lecture deals with *The Principle of Value, and the Idea of God,* and is occupied mainly, though not exclusively, with an examination and critical estimate of Professor A. Seth Pringle-Pattison's classic and important contribution to the literature of Theism in his Aberdeen Gifford Lectures. Dr. Davidson welcomes Dr. Pringle-Pattison's "strenuous insistence on the immanence of God" and echoes the desire that we may "get rid of the conception of the Divine Power as a great Oriental despot, self-centred and irre-

sponsible." Transcendence so regarded makes community of spirit and living fellowship of the finite spirit with its Creator either irrelevant or impossible. But Dr. Davidson performs the valuable service to contemporary thought of showing that the conception of transcendence involves the conception of ultimate efficient cause and source, and is a necessary element in our idea of the Supreme. The idea of the Sovereignty of God, obscured and misrepresented by the "Eastern despot" notion, is really involved in any adequate view of the Fatherhood of God. Some of the most vital religious and rational interests in the doctrine of God are conserved by means of the conception of the divine transcendence,* and the over-emphasis upon the equally valid idea of immanence does not make for real understanding. Both transcendence and immanence are necessary aspects of our view of the Godhead, and give intellectual expression to important moral and religious insights, needs, and discoveries. In this connection it is interesting to note that "the theist cannot be satisfied with an Absolute that simply *evolves* and does not *create*."† This is a point upon which Ward also speaks with conviction: "The attempt to equate creation regarded as intellective intuition with a pure or absolute self-consciousness—if this were conceivable—

* *E.g.*, the over-individual Ideal.

† Davidson, *Recent Theistic Discussion*, p. 130 .

will not avail for theism: it leaves no room for the divine transcendence, and without this the distinctness of God and the world and the dependence of the world on God both alike disappear. Neither absolute knowledge nor absolute self-consciousness can take the place of the idea of creation."

The idea of creation resting as it does upon the conception of transcendence, upon the "ground" of all "becoming," brings to the foreground the importance of gaining a sound notion of the relations between transcendence and immanence. In an interesting chapter on "Transcendence and Immanence" in the volume edited by Mr. Streeter with the title *The Spirit*, Dr. Pringle-Pattison seeks to show the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity as the means of preserving a due balance in thought regarding these related but distinct concepts. There can be no doubt that in that chapter Dr. Pringle-Pattison just fails of doing full justice to his own intention by failing to estimate aright the real strength and value of the trinitarian view as "an ontological concept." God's "indwelling in man" (to use Dr. Pringle-Pattison's phrase) does not fully express our idea of God. It is a true idea as far as it goes, but it requires supplementation. "It gives only *immanence*, and *transcendence* is required as well." The idea of Personality in God cannot be maintained (as Clement Webb points out in his Gifford Lecture) unless the idea of transcend-

ence is maintained. Only by means of the affirmation of Personality in God can "the Supreme mean anything effective for us at all," and an impersonal God or an intellectual "principle" does not answer to the testimony of the moral consciousness.

Professor Davidson gives the following account of the significance "of the theological dogma of the Trinity": "It virtually says: The Creator of the world is necessarily greater than the world, and yet, as its constant Sustainer and Righteous Governor, is ever-present in it, and through the operation of His Spirit, is ever producing and directing its development, not least in the re-creation and regeneration of sinful men. In the next place, it is a philosophical attempt to surmount the representation of God either (*a*) as the Absolute Subject, with no 'Other' set over against Him as Object—a mere abstraction impossible in Reality; or (*b*) as a distant solitary Being engaged from all eternity in contemplating Himself and satisfied with His own glory: and to express, in formal intellectual fashion, *the essentially social nature of the Godhead*—unity in diversity—in terms of conscious being, with personality as the differentiating fact. From which conception, by the very impulsion of logic, men have come to see, and Christianity has enshrined it, that the essence of God is Love: for Love is by its very nature *social*—a relation between *persons;* and if God be a Person, He cannot be a mere individual

per se—an 'individual *per se*' is solely a fiction of the imagination, impossible in fact. It is not so *only now:* it has *always* been so: an absolutely solitary Deity never was, and never could be. Love must go out of itself and find its object, for it is not mere emotion, but an active, living principle; and the doctrine of the Triune God is the impressive theological way of expressing this."

I have taken the liberty of giving this extended quotation because of its importance, and because it says extremely well just what ought to be said about the "ontological" idea of the Trinity, which is Christianity's permanent gift to the world. By means of this doctrine all the essential interests of religious experience and thought are conserved, and by it these are conserved in a way to which any other statement or view is only an approach.

The appreciation of the example of Christ as the effective instance of overcoming the world in the strength of the Spirit—an appreciation which is the first part of recognition of the unique gift which is Christianity's heritage—means a true realisation not only of the sources of spiritual power, but also effective confirmation of our intuition of the character of God. Dr. Pringle-Pattison sets forth in well-chosen words this aspect of the contribution made by Christianity to the hope and confidence of humanity: "What was the secret of Christianity, the new interpretation of life by which it conquered

the world? The answer is in a sense a commonplace. It was the lesson of self-sacrifice, and life for others, precisely through which, nevertheless, the truest and intensest realisation of the self was to be attained—in the Pauline phrase, dying to live; in the words of Jesus, losing one's life to find it. . . . This conception of the meaning of life, embodied in the figure of One who spoke of Himself as being among men as one that serveth, this was the victory which overcame the world. It is the final abandonment of the hedonistic ideal, through the recognition of the inherent emptiness of the self-centred life. The whole standard of judgment upon life and the purpose of the world is accordingly changed."*

In this passage we have expression of the profound difference between that insight into the meaning of life which is "the secret of Christianity" and the outlook which Naturalism supports and cultivates. In such an insight religion gains its own rightful pre-eminence by means of its most effective and concrete manifestation. Not merely for our life-attitude but also for our knowledge of the "fundamental structure of reality" is such an insight decisive and determining. It means not merely power for life, but *revelation of the ultimate Reality. It means, as I have sought to point out, that that which is decisive for the moral and spiritual*

* A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 410.

life is decisive also for our conception of God and the universe. This bearing of "the new interpretation of life," whereby Christianity conquered the world and revealed and uttered forth openly "the thoughts of many hearts," is effectively brought out by Dr. Pringle-Pattison in words which ought to go far towards dispelling the illusion and prejudice which relegates the "value-judgment" to the merely "subjective" value: "For if this is the deepest insight into human life, must we not also recognise it as the open secret of the universe? That is the conclusion to which we have been led up more than once already. . . . It is the fundamental structure of reality which we are seeking to determine. For that surely is the meaning of all discussion as to the being and nature of God. . . . And thus, for a metaphysic which has emancipated itself from physical categories, the ultimate conception of God is, as it is for religion, that of the eternal Redeemer of the world."*

"The world is God's self-limitation—self-renunciation, might we venture to say? And so God is love. And what must that world be that is worthy of such love? The only worthy object of love is just love: it must, then, be a world that can love God. But love is free: in a ready-made world, then, it could have no place. Only as we learn to know God do we learn to love Him: hence the long

* Pringle-Pattison, *op. cit.*, p. 411 *f.*

and painful discipline of evolution, with its dying to live—the converse process to incarnation—the putting off the earthly for the likeness of God. In such a realm of ends we trust 'that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law.' We cannot live or move without faith, that is clear. Is it not then rational to believe in the best? we ask; and can there be a better?"* These concluding words of Ward's St. Andrews Gifford Lectures well set forth the ultimate contents of the great and rational venture of faith, a venture which is at the foundation of all science and of all our knowledge.

"Life would seem irrational save as a part of some larger existence, and the severity of its discipline unjust save as a training; the audacity of man's aspirations would be childish or outrageous save as a genuine though imperfect apprehension of actual realities, and his humility and sense of unworthiness unintelligible save as an education for other responsibilities and privileges."†

I have, in the later part of this volume, dwelt to some extent upon the Christian "world-view" gained by means of meditation upon the wider significance of the "organism of Christian knowledge." I have done so because the contemporary need regarding "restatement" does not really turn

* *The Realm of Ends*, p. 453.

† S. A. Cook, Hastings's *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, (art. "Religion"), vol. x., p. 689.

upon the contents of the Christian basis of certainty. That basis of certainty resting upon the general impression of the work and person of Christ as that is mirrored in the New Testament, is really not only in effect unassailed by modern enquiry, but is definitely unassailable. It is so because, as I have pointed out, there is no portion of the New Testament which does not rest upon, and grow out of, that conviction of the place of Christ in and for the spiritual life which finds voice in the "apostolic consciousness," and in the continuous experience of the Christian individual and community. All alternative views are reduced to "conjectural emendations" both for lack of matter and also from the fact that they are dependent upon a literature which is everywhere saturated with the characteristically Christian point of view. The above states —of course, merely broadly, but still with sufficient precision—not only the general positive results of criticism, but also the main reality discoverable by spiritual intuition. I do not dwell upon this, because *the main contemporary difficulties do not lie in this direction.*

The chief reason for the existing lack of contact between the modern mind and the Christian religion is in the failure to state, vindicate, and commend the great heritage of spiritual thought in the Christian view of God and the world. We need to do again for our own generation what in past ages was done

by the great Christian thinkers for the generations in which they lived. We need a presentation of the philosophy of Christianity in terms of contemporary knowledge and with reference to the real thought of the age. We need that in great and detailed outline calculated to meet the requirements of systematic thinkers. And we need that in more simple but not less exact terminology for the masses and for the public with just average education.

The main principles of such a philosophy of religion—self-commending as it most certainly would prove—are clear and definite, and their full unfolding would show that in the Christian view of God and the world the contemporary knowledge of God is summed up, while at the same time it is perfected by the new and more precise definitions attained on the basis of the Christian organism of knowledge. Its stress for the mind of the age would be much less "individualistic" than the Augustinian or "Reformation" theology, and for its leading concepts it would make large use of Neoplatonism and the great cosmic Christology of Ephesians, Galatians, and the Johannine writings. Such a work would demand the efforts of more than one man, but a good beginning might be made with a volume *on the scale and of the standard of the Gifford Lectures* of Bosanquet or Ward. The first of such a series of Lectures in Christian Philosophy might be on the Transcendence and Immanence of

God in the light of modern thought and in view of the distinctively Christian positions. A smaller series of manuals might do for the great Christian philosophical ideas what has been done for great philosophical systems in such a series as the "Philosophies, Ancient and Modern" series. Nothing of more practical value than the production of such works could be undertaken at the present time, *and upon their successful production depends in this day the revival of religious thought and aspiration both among the more* EDUCATED PEOPLE *and among* THE MASSES.

Such an expression of a profound conviction will doubtless only cause a smile among those who think that the call for restatement is by no means so urgent as such words imply. I am not thinking of such people. It is no time to take council with those who, "like the horse and mule, have no understanding." I am thinking of all that body of educated and thoughtful young people who "on the tempestuous sea of knowledge" require both sail and anchorage. I am thinking of no fancied situation, but of a position of affairs which is fraught with more than a little peril—a position of affairs which is summed up by Dr. Tudor Jones in words which ought to sink into the mind: "When we view the past quarter of a century, and see the enormous number of promising young men and women who have drifted away from institutional religion, the

picture is enough to sadden the most optimistic heart. There is a real danger that religious institutions will fail more and more to help the intelligent young of our generation unless they endeavour to make them conversant with the contributions of modern knowledge to the life of the spirit of man, and to show them the infinite importance of its development. Something is happening the whole time in our world which necessitates a change in our intellectual conceptions regarding life and the universe. So many good and able men stand staggered when they witness how little the scientific and philosophic basis of religion is understood by the young who are so well equipped in other respects."*

It is not difficult to find illustrations of the advantage to be derived from the possession and dissemination of a philosophical theology. No doubt many of the existing difficulties, which rest upon the lack of contact between genuine Christian thought and the mind of the age in all its strength and in all its limitations, would be reduced, if not got rid of, by a more careful presentation of what Christianity really does teach. Dr. Gore in his recent book, *Belief in God,* touches upon one aspect of this consideration : " Very likely if the Darwinian doctrine of development had been formulated much earlier—let us say in the fourth century, in the atmosphere

* W. Tudor Jones, *The Spiritual Ascent of Man*, p. 53.

generated by Greek philosophical Christianity—it would have produced no such shock. The idea that the early chapters of Genesis are 'allegory' and not history had been widely held in the early Church, and not only in the Alexandrian school. Augustine himself, as is well known, following Gregory of Nyssa, had propounded the view that God in the beginning created only germs or causes of the forms of life, which were afterwards to be developed in gradual course. And it had been repeatedly asserted by the leaders of the Church that the first man was not created perfect—for it is God's method to do things gradually—but only in a fit state to advance towards perfection. Accommodation, then, between the points of view of science and religion would probably have been much easier then than it was in the nineteenth century. But it is in the nineteenth century and not in the fourth that we are now interested."*

The "atmosphere generated by Greek philosophical Christianity" is an atmosphere which it would be well to reproduce again in this age in which literalism is countered by equally hide-bound literalism, and when even our "heterodoxy" is merely an "inverted orthodoxy." To-day we are tempted to remain in a permanent impasse between "yes" or "no," and not to pass on to a new synthesis. In such an atmosphere also we might hope

* Gore, *Belief in God*, p. 10.

for a fuller recognition of the truth that our claim that Christianity is indispensable by no means involves any undervaluing of all that is good, valuable, and permanent in other religions and in other systems of thought. No religious interest, certainly no Christian interest, is served by failing to recognise and gratefully to acknowledge "the light that coming into the world lighteneth every man," and the fact that "in every nation he that doeth righteousness is accepted of God." Dr. Gore has some wise words on this point also, and in giving utterance to them is quite in the spirit of liberal and philosophical thought: "I am sure that in the consideration of the truth of the prophetic testimony we must not leave out of account the effect of their teaching on those who accepted it, and that on the widest and most permanent field. It is impossible not to feel that men who exhibit a quite new power in life are thereby proved to have got into closer touch with reality. And if this new power appears as a direct consequence of a theological belief, the new power so far accredits the belief. Buddhism and Mohammedanism and Stoicism liberated new human power to deal with life, and doubtless in proportion to the truth which was in them. But I believe that the spirit of Christianity in its most genuine form exhibits human nature at its best and richest."* In this passage we get a balanced state-

* Gore, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

ment both of the truth of the constant evidence of the work of the Spirit, and also of the inclusive and special value of the Christian religion.

I have sought to place discussion of the question relating to the absoluteness and indispensableness of Christianity on their right footing. If they were always so placed there would be no justification for my enterprise, but I have sought to meet a need which many must feel.

Christian theology as a system of doctrine, and Christian philosophy as a scientific world-view gained through the Christian idea of God, are neither self-supporting nor self-sufficient. They rise from, and depend upon, that actual solution of the universal problem of religion which God confers in the historic work, and continuous operation upon us in the spirit, of Christ Jesus. The thing that is creative of Christianity both as religion and as theory is the historic and continuous Act of Redemption.

The general theistic arguments may lead us far, and especially the moral argument stated in harmony with a sound view of values, may lead us a great way in unfolding the idea of God. But the highest and most decisive source of our knowledge of God is religious and spiritual, and rests upon that effectual work upon our souls wherein God is known from His action. That work and the revelation brought thereby are not

out of relation to our experience and knowledge of God in nature and in general human relations. In relation to that magnificent heritage in the knowledge of God which has become the possession of the race, and which is well expressed in theistic Idealism, the Christian contribution stands as more of the same kind. It completes the philosophical edifice by adding the most important material.

Philosophy is only a method, and for a complete synthesis Christianity brings its own material to be justly valued and to find its rightful place. If the argument of this book has been followed, we have been able to see that for the philosophy of religion and for our view of God, the decisive factor in our view of ultimate Reality, that place is central, absolute, and decisive. Such a recognition of degree of importance is not an abandonment of philosophical method, but a completion of the work of philosophy by adding the most important material for construction of a total view.

The truth regarding Christ is more and greater than records of an earthly life. It includes the sway and influence of One who in virtue of the historic facts, by a continuous personal action as living Spirit upon spirit, in the power of an endless life, made the Church and historic Christianity. His personal contact now is an inward reality. Nor can we separate our trust in God from our trust in

Christ. These are apprehended together in one spiritual perception. Any fair and impartial estimate of the original and creative elements in Christianity must include recognition of its distinctive contribution to the conception of God. The "specific genius" of Christianity does not consist in its provision of a completed "world-view" as the chief item of its contribution to the thought and hope of the world. Christianity's great gift, upon which both its absolute value and its indispensableness rest, is in something which it confers as a solution of the problem of the "self"—that means something which appeals to personality in its unity, comprising will and feeling as well as thought. The unfolding of the implications of an effective solution of personality's problem, however, involves and leads on to that special view of God and the world which is itself the intellectual stronghold of Christianity. Such a view is made known "in spirit and in truth," and indeed is capable of presentation in this age as in those ages that are past. Indeed, nothing could be of greater service for the thought of the present day than a re-expression of this doctrine of God.

To fall back upon the blankness of the undifferentiated Absolute is to negate the testimony of the higher values, and all the witness of life and individuality. If God possesses life and love in Himself, it may well be that after all we can afford to

eat and to drink because it is certain that to-morrow we do not die. If the Holy Spirit is really vitally interested in variety, it is possible for us to escape from narrowness. When we say that "God is love," and also that we "acknowledge the Trinity in Unity," we say what is precisely equivalent. Such a confidence and such a belief reach the last grounds of our human hopes and desires. We may not care to say that whosoever would be saved must thus think of the ultimate Reality, but if we cannot thus think of it it is meaningless to talk about either salvation or the fruition of our hopes or the conservation of our values. Equally it is impossible to thus think except in the strength of the work and revelation of God in Christ. If the main thesis of this essay is right and I have succeeded in establishing the fact of the indispensableness of Christianity for this and every age and the grounds of that indispensableness, the actual truths stated only set in clear light the magnitude, complexity, and difficulty of the problem of bringing the power and truth of Christianity to bear upon contemporary life and thought. It is certain that no religion can hope to win its way, in this day and generation, which cannot commend itself to reason, distinct as that is from "rationalism." We are at a crisis, not merely of human thought, but of human experience: at a crisis of the human spirit. It will be well if, despite the passing of things that are well outworn, we can

see clearly and state truly, for this age and for the generations following, the things that alone make for our healing and our peace.

There is something in the old literalistic view of the Bible which obscures the greatness of Christ, but it cannot fairly be said that we are yet able to register the gains which should follow from our new insights. The contemporary situation constitutes a challenge; perhaps, even, a menace; and while we have need of patience, our virtue must not be restricted to that.

The steady emancipation of scientific and philosophic thought from materialistic metaphysical presuppositions is all to the good, but there are vast arrears of new synthesis and re-expression to be made up. Above all, there remain the tragic consequences of the failure of Victorian science and theology to lead the modern world on paths of spiritual competence and fruitfulness. It is not enough for Christianity to adroitly use the thought of the age: it must be able to direct and strengthen its life and its thought. For this we need a new turning of the Christian mind towards the secret sources of its strength.

Nothing is more important, more vital and essential, than this matter of the presentation of Christian truth so as to win the understanding and gain the allegiance of the heart and mind of the age. Nothing is more practical than this, and compared with this

most other activities are unpractical. We shall gain nothing by restricting our view of the real range of this question or by seeing it in false perspective. The question before us concerns not the relative rank of any party in Christian circles, but the actual preservation for days to come of the power and influence of Christianity itself. Nor is it possible to over-estimate the magnitude of a task which involves not only the meeting of the deepest needs of the spirit, but also the creation of the atmosphere in which the needs can be appreciated and the solution understood.

If for one moment we take stock of the deep need of humanity in its present tossing on cross-currents of thought and ideal, and relate our vision to humanity's permanent sources of greatness and victory, it will not be with hesitation that we shall turn to One who overcame the world and who can by His "Cross and Passion and glorious Resurrection" both deliver and empower.

The investigation which it was the purpose of this little book to undertake is limited to the question, Can we dispense with Christianity? We have considered this in the light of modern knowledge, and have tracked down the crux of the question. The indispensableness, absoluteness, centrality of Christianity—they are at root the same thing—all rest upon the possibility of showing that it holds an absolute and verifiable solution, on account of the

place of Christ, of the problem with which religion must be, and is always, concerned. Religion comes to its full flowering in Christianity through the strengthening liberating action of God in and by Christ Jesus.

The ethical and religious interests are primary, but the supreme action reveals supremely, as the action of God given in all genuine uplifting of the soul always reveals. The crown of revelation is given in that which absolutely satisfies the conditions of true self-realisation in spiritual dependence upon God. The point of view gained and presented leads directly to an affirmation of the Deity of Christ on account of His performance of the work of God in its individual and universal aspects. It provides a means for correcting that over-emphasis of the idea of Immanence which is the root source of a reduced Christology.

The thing which gives absolute value to Christianity is not a fetter upon the human spirit, but the very means of its ethical liberation and spiritual victory. It is absolute both for action and thought with that genuine elasticity and freedom which must characterise anything of absolute worth. Its power and its theoretic unfolding are "in spirit and in truth." It makes God known as He is in Himself, and teaches that there is no power nor truth other than that which is active and revealed in the work of Christ.

Our existing situation, which gives a new intensity and urgency to the question of our title, is just an acute form of a permanent situation which is the very thing in the problem of religion. If we can fairly entertain any hopes of meeting that situation, it is because "all days are the Lord's," and because humanity can neither escape from its permanent task nor fail to find and to use the sources of its equipment and of its triumph.

The situation created by the breakdown, under stress of historical and literary criticism, of the dogmas of literal or plenary inspiration of the Biblical writings is a situation which calls for balanced but decisive revision of methods of interpretation and presentation of the truths of religion. The young children like some of the great allegories of later Jewish thought and sentiment as presented in the Genesis account and in such books as that of Daniel. Care must, however, be exercised that whatever didactic value such stories may have may not be allowed to obscure their historical and scientific limitations. It is nothing short of a tragedy if the mind as it progresses towards adult maturity has to chiefly occupy itself in regard to religious truth in disentangling these from a setting in the thought-forms of past ages.

Not merely with regard to the mythical and allegorical features in the literature, but also with regard to the entire change of view produced by our new

knowledge of the world—a change which growingly dominates the whole intellectual horizon—there is not only a human demand for, but also a human right to receive from, the guides of humanity a new synthesis of thought directing a new body of teaching. How to conserve what is of permanent value not only in the old modes of thought but also in the literary vehicles of the great confidences, hopes, and aspirations of humanity, while also fitting these into their dominant place in our modern schemes of thought and teaching, is the present task before exponents of religion. The need is so great that there ought to be great sympathy and patience with even tentative efforts towards what for some years will remain, even at best, only provisional restatements. We have need of patience, but it is necessary also to do what we can with the actual synoptic views of truth and reality, conserving all values, which we can for the time being attain. We are at a turning-point not only in thought but also in the spiritual life of the whole human race, and to miss the existing opportunity or to neglect the existing challenge is not only to live "in worlds not realised," but to fail culpably in a duty and in an opportunity.

The broad lessons gained by our enquiry are in the main the practical value and usefulness of well-founded theories of the determinate structure of a thoroughly conditioned universe. Our best hopes

and our most constant and solid practical endeavours, our own most valued interests and our contribution to the enduring interests of our day and generation, rest upon work well directed by knowledge of what is really enduring and valuable—by work which, being in harmony with the lines of human stability and worth, does not fail of its aim and of its reward.

If we have gained, as a result of the present investigation, even a faint outline of the true world-view; if we have, in the light of the highest witness of the best of humanity and in the light of God's disclosure of Himself and of His will concerning us, come upon the enduring foundations of well-being, social and industrial—our quest will not have been in vain. The practical applications of the insights which we have gained need never be far to seek, for there is that which lieth to our hands which God doth touch and own.

When we say that God is absolute and that He has made Himself known to us, in spirit and in truth, through the strengthening work and in the Person of Jesus Christ, we mean that the loving and holy Personality shown forth by Jesus is really master of the universe. When we say that God in Christ, by His own deed, solves, for the individual and for humanity, the problem of religion, we mean that "neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

The love of God must be trusted: if it is understood, then it is understood in spirit and implicitly, not in detail of experience, not in range far outreaching hope and thought. No investigation of present-day human conditions, no deeper insight gained by the insight of the philosopher and thinker, removes the fact of the hardness of our human way, what Dr. Bosanquet terms "the hazard and hardship" both of appearance and of reality. The same writer, in view of his realisation of the profound implications of our finite individuality, also speaks of "the deep significance of the symbol of the Cross." It is well we should take to mind the fact that in this "vale of soul-making" it is both superfluous and unmeaning to seek to "die in our nest." It is better, however, to see that there is a way whereby we may be made strong, not only to suffer, but also to overcome. "In the Christian experience we are conscious of a change of values, whereby that which to non-Christian thought seems irrational and evil becomes the means of the highest moral development, and the instrument of the most blessed spiritual experience. What Paul affirmed of the cross of Christ* can be paralleled in every profound Christian experience. In this change of estimate we may find the key to much which still seems dark in God's conduct of the world."†

* 1 Cor. i. 24.

† W. Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 112 *f.*

In provision of adequate example and power whereby the world may be "overcome" and the lower values relegated to their place, we have found the generic and distinctive contribution of Christianity. In the sign of God's estimate of the worth of the soul, and in virtue of His work to make that valuation effectual upon the soul, we have gained the thing that makes Christianity absolute and final. If on these grounds we have just slightly developed the theoretic unfoldings of these meanings, we have only done so, so far as to show the practical importance of a sound world-view and of a grasp of proximate and ultimate Realities. When we get down to the real difficulties, confront the final issues of our personal and corporate existence, the Christian Faith is the definite and explicit affirmation that this is an "honest world," that the things most central in our moral value and effort are the things most certainly known. If, further, we follow on till we gain the Christian view of God, in the light of the highest instance of His revealing works, we do but assert that in reality our necessary thoughts about Him do abide as eternal truths. On such convictions and confidences rest our best endeavours and all the hopes of the world.

The prevalence for some years of certain habits of thought, gendered by a view of the bearings of scientific knowledge and by a practical expectation from the results of a civilisation based on material

interests which maturer thought and serious experience have shown to be untenable, has obscured the strong and indeed unassailable practical and philosophical grounds of genuine Theistic Idealism. The more spiritual interpretation of life and Reality is now gradually, and with entrenched solidity, coming into its own among, first, the better educated, and then among the masses of the people. Among the new insights thus gained, which are really the modern forms of humanity's progressively appreciated heritage in the knowledge of God, the contribution made by Christianity has its own pre-eminence and power. Clarifying its concepts and expressing them for the life and mind of this present day, Christianity will yet make available for all men its positive and permanent heritage, its final and absolute value for humanity in its task and in its deeper insight.

We read that a great conqueror wept because, having come to an end of his conquests, there were "no more worlds to conquer": this occasion for sorrow is excluded from the outlook of those who, with a true reading of the meaning of life, see that there are "all those worlds wherein the people of God come to their own." If, having sailed all the seas of this world, the soul can set sail upon another Ocean and enter upon the deep waters where abide goodness, beauty, and truth, in the Light, Life, and Love which uphold them, it will but make use of its

real scope and powers, and enter upon its condign solace, beatitude, and destiny. It is not, however, merely to suggest the great message which may come to us in these days from those who have inherited the mystical tradition that the writer would wish to close this book with a hint of the real "powers of the Deep," but to affirm, what he hopes this little book has not failed to make clear, that the greater consolations flow over into these present spaces of time and sense and renew the face of the earth.

Commencing with a general statement of the wide range of the question and the source of difficulties felt by many on account of the undue influence of a discredited Materialism, we found the crux of the question in the matter of the rank of Christianity as a religion. In order to attain a sound view of the place of Christianity among the actual religions, we sought to discover a valid criterion of value. This criterion we found through an analysis of the generic features of the constant problem of religion, the question of provision of means of spiritual strengthening, the fulfilment of the conditions of genuine self-affirmation.

Estimated by the criterion of religious value, the Christian claims that God in Christ, and by means of His redemptive Deed, provides assurance of the worth of the individual soul, gives power to gain spiritual domination over the world in religious

dependence upon God, were found to be claims which, if true and exclusively given in Christianity in effective mode, certainly marked off Christianity as possessing absolute religious value through satisfaction of the factors of the problem of religion. It was further shown that, by becoming aware of the actual impression of Christ given in the New Testament literature, verification of the distinctive claims could be gained. A sufficient sign of the estimate placed by God upon the value of the soul is given by means of the earthly life and resurrection of the Founder of Christianity. Adequate power to rise to fulfilment of the conditions of true stability and worth is granted in virtue of Christ's example, present redemptive efficacy, and continuous witness to Himself in verification of the New Testament presentation.

In thus discovering the ultimate values of the spirit we are unfolding the structure of Reality. Importance and Reality are sides of one equation, and that which is certain for, and foundational in, the moral and spiritual realm is most certainly known. Use was made of the principle of Value in order to establish these central points. Stress was laid upon the practical importance of well-grounded theory. It was claimed that both Reason and Revelation meet in the conception of the highest good.

The place of Christ in the active solution of the

problem of the self in its actual position as a candidate for personality, the actual redemptive significance both of His work and of Himself as the worker, requires, and of necessity calls for, that view of His place within the sphere of Godhead which has become Christendom's heritage. The doctrine of God in the light of the function and Person of Christ is the unfolding of the theoretic implications of the given absolute solution of the religious problem. It stands to the main current of Theistic Idealism as "more of the same kind," guided by the most important and verifiable data.

The actual present situation of humanity constitutes "a spiritual crisis," but is only the current aspect, on the individual scale and on the world scale, of the constant problem of the self of which we gained the general features. It follows, then, that Christianity is indispensable for this age, and even especially important in view of a certain disillusionment concerning earthly hopes.

The primacy of the moral and religious interests in the actual rise and in the contemporary vindication of Christianity does not require or mean any abandonment of the theoretic and doctrinal interests. Indeed, it has been one of the chief intentions of this little book to show that the great doctrinal affirmations regarding Christ and the great idea of God which Christianity has developed in virtue of its own insight, are the legitimate and inevitable outcome of

a full understanding of the place of Christ in the spiritual life, and themselves serve those moral and religious interests which called them forth.

The Christian idea of God has a value for the most practical interests of humanity which it is folly to obscure, and it verifies itself as truth in virtue of Reason dealing with Reason's most significant data. To abandon Christianity in its essential form as the solution of the problem of religion and in its essential intellectual expression in the Christian doctrines of Christ and of the Godhead, is to enter upon a path finally destructive of our confidence both in Reason's loftiest results and in the reasonableness of the universe.

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This short list of books dealing with topics of interest in contemporary enquiry is offered in the hope that it may be found useful to those who may desire to continue study on the lines of the present little volume. It is not, of course, exhaustive, but I have named no book which does not possess its own significance and value. In some cases it might be of advantage to begin with the books marked thus (*).

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